

PERSEPOLIS 2

THE STORY OF A RETURN



MARJANE SATRAPI

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PERSEPOLIS 2

MARJANE SATRAPI



PANTHEON



THE SOUP

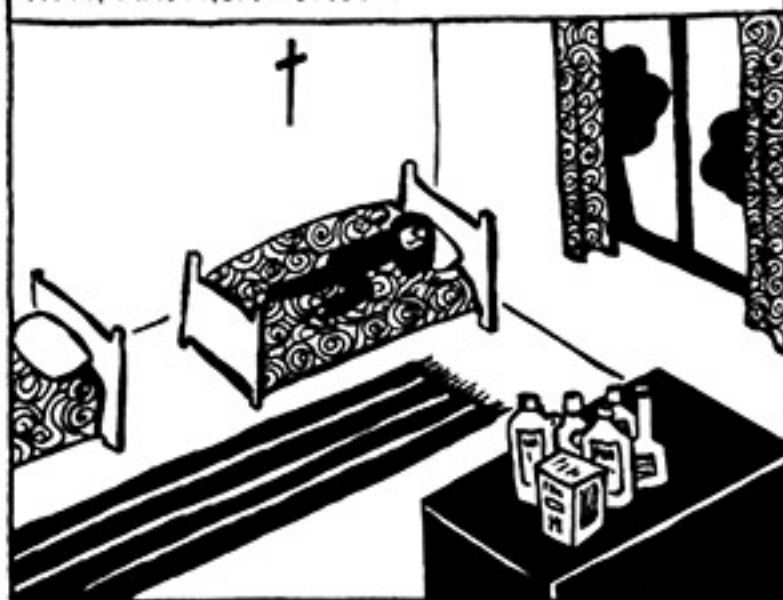
NOVEMBER 1984. I AM IN AUSTRIA. I HAD COME HERE WITH THE IDEA OF LEAVING A RELIGIOUS IRAN FOR AN OPEN AND SECULAR EUROPE AND THAT ZOZO, MY MOTHER'S BEST FRIEND, WOULD LOVE ME LIKE HER OWN DAUGHTER.



ONLY HERE I AM! SHE LEFT ME AT A BOARDING HOUSE RUN BY NUNS.



MY ROOM WAS SMALL, AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE I HAD TO SHARE MY SPACE WITH ANOTHER PERSON.



I HADN'T MET HER YET. I ONLY KNEW THAT HER NAME WAS LUCIA.



I WONDERED WHAT SHE WOULD LOOK LIKE.



EUROPE, THE ALPS, SWITZERLAND, AUSTRIA... FROM THIS I DEDUCED THAT SHE WOULD BE LIKE HEIDI.



THIS WAS OKAY WITH ME. I REALLY LIKED HEIDI.

I HAD BEEN IN VIENNA ELEVEN DAYS. ZOZO AND HER DAUGHTER SHIRIN, WHOM I HAD KNOWN DURING MY CHILDHOOD, HAD COME TO GET ME AT THE AIRPORT.



SHIRIN WAS AS I REMEMBERED HER. HOWEVER, I DETECTED SOMETHING UNKIND IN THE LOOK HER MOTHER GAVE ME.



YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED MUCH. WELL, YES! NOW YOU HAVE LONG HAIR!!

YOU HAVEN'T EITHER. YOU'RE THE SAME.



IT'S GOING TO BE COOL TO GO TO SCHOOL WITHOUT A VEIL, TO NOT HAVE TO BEAT ONESELF EVERY DAY FOR THE WAR MARTYRS...



HAVE YOU SEEN THESE? THEY'RE REALLY FASHIONABLE. THEY'RE TO PROTECT YOUR EARS FROM THE COLD. DO YOU WANT TO TRY THEM ON?

NO THANKS!



THIS IS MY RASPBERRY-SCENTED PEN, BUT I HAVE STRAWBERRY AND BLACKBERRY ONES, TOO.



DO YOU WANT TO PUT ON SOME LIPSTICK? I LOVE PEARLY PINK. IT'S VERY IN!!!

HMPHH...



WHAT A TRAITOR! WHILE PEOPLE WERE DYING IN OUR COUNTRY, SHE WAS TALKING TO ME ABOUT TRIVIAL THINGS.



AND AFTER THESE TEN DAYS...



OUR APARTMENT, AS
YOU'VE NO DOUBT NOTICED,
IS TOO SMALL. I FOUND YOU
A BOARDING HOUSE IN A
BEAUTIFUL PART OF
VIENNA, NEAR RATHAUS.



IT'S RUN BY NUNS. THE
MOTHER SUPERIOR AND
SEVERAL OF THE SISTERS
SPEAK FLUENT FRENCH.



WHEN DO
WE GO?

RIGHT AWAY. GO
PACK YOUR BAG.



NUNS. I WAS ACQUAINTED WITH THEM. I WAS AT THE ÉCOLE
JEANNE D'ARC* IN TEHRAN. THE NUNS I ENCOUNTERED THERE
WERE FEROCIOUS.

YOU'LL COME SEE US ON
WEEKENDS. WE'LL GO ICE-
SKATING.

YEAH,
YEAH...



DESPITE EVERYTHING, I WAS HAPPY TO LEAVE THEIR HOUSE. IN
THIS WAY, I'D BE RID OF ZOZO THE MEAN AND SHIRIN THE INANE.

* JOAN OF ARC SCHOOL

THE ONLY ONE I WAS GOING TO
MISS WAS HOUSHANG. I SAW IN
HIM A PROTECTOR.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

YES, UNCLE HOUSHANG.



HE SAW IN ME AN ALLY.

OKAY! THAT'S ENOUGH.
LET'S GO!



AND WE LEFT...



*ALDI IS A SUPERMARKET AND LINKS MEANS LEFT IN GERMAN.

IT HAD BEEN FOUR YEARS SINCE I'D SEEN SUCH A WELL-STOCKED STORE.



THE FIRST AISLE I HEADED FOR WAS THE ONE WITH SCENTED DETERGENTS.



WE COULDN'T FIND THEM IN IRAN ANYMORE.



I FILLED THE CART WITH ALL KINDS OF PRODUCTS.



EVEN TODAY, AFTER ALL THIS TIME, YOU CAN ALWAYS FIND AT LEAST A DOZEN BOXES OF GOOD-SMELLING LAUNDRY POWDER IN MY HOUSE.

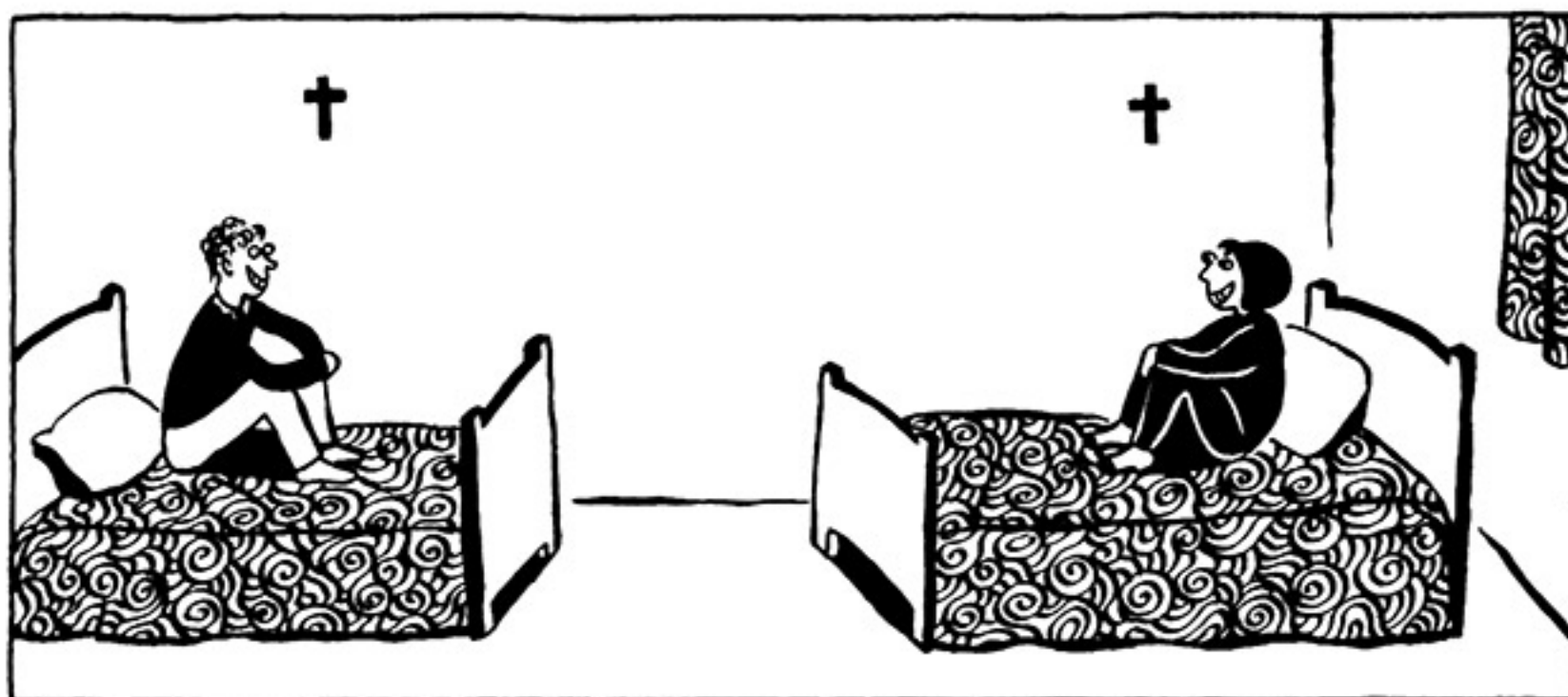
GIVEN MY RESTRICTED BUDGET, I TOOK TWO BOXES OF PASTA.



I DIDN'T KNOW YET THAT THIS WOULD BE MY ONLY FOOD DURING THE FOUR YEARS TO COME.

I HANDED OVER A 100 SHILLING BILL. LUCKILY, IT WAS ENOUGH, OTHERWISE I WOULD HAVE BEEN ASHAMED.





I OFFERED HER SOME OF THE PISTACHIOS I'D BROUGHT WITH ME, A PRESENT FROM MY UNCLE. THEY ARE A SPECIALTY OF IRAN THAT IS OFTEN GIVEN WHEN SOMEONE IS GOING ABROAD. WE CONSIDER OUR PISTACHIOS TO BE THE WORLD'S BEST. . .



... AS WE CONSIDER MANY OF OUR THINGS TO BE.

LUCIA MADE ME A KNORR SOUP, "CREAM OF MUSHROOM."



I DIDN'T LIKE IT MUCH.



MAGST DU FERNSEHEN?

FERNSEHEN?

FENS, FUNS,
FENR, ...
FENÊTRE*!!!



* WINDOW IN FRENCH.

FERNSEHEN?

NEIN! HI HI HI ...
DAS IST FENSTER!



WARTE MAL!



DAS IST EIN FERNSEHEN.

AH! TV!
IT'S THE SAME
THING.



TV!

FERNSEHEN!
YA! YA!
FERNSEHEN!



I WAS HAPPY. I WAS SPEAKING GERMAN.

SO WE WENT TO THE TV ROOM, WHICH WAS ON THE GROUND FLOOR.



EVERYONE WAS WATCHING A MOVIE. THEY SEEMED TO BE ENJOYING THEMSELVES. EXCEPT ME! I WAS HEARING "ACHS" AND "OCHS," "ICHS" AND "MICHS," BUT NOTHING THAT I COULD UNDERSTAND.



I DECIDED TO LEAVE DISCREETLY.





TYROL

EVERY MORNING, I WAS RUDELY AWAKENED BY THE SOUND OF LUCIA'S HAIR DRYER.



IT WAS MY VERY OWN ALARM CLOCK. SET FOR 6:30 ON THE DOT.



WOKEN BY A HAIR DRYER TO THEN RETURN TO A SCHOOL WHERE I HAD NO FRIENDS.



BUT IT WAS TO BE EXPECTED. I WAS ARRIVING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TRIMESTER AND CLIQUES HAD ALREADY FORMED.



AND THEN THERE WAS THE FIRST MATH TEST. I DISTINGUISHED MYSELF BY MY HIGH LEVEL.



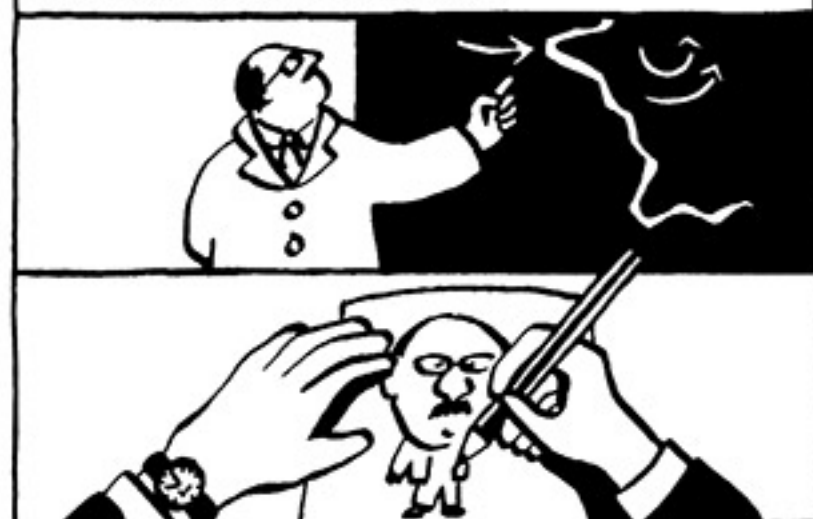
SATRAPI! BRAVO! EXCELLENT WORK. JUST ONE MISTAKE COST YOU HALF A POINT. YOU GOT A 19.5 OUT OF 20.

OH SHIT!



THIS GRADE WON ME A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF ATTENTION. I WAS VERY POPULAR WHEN IT CAME TO MATH HOMEWORK.

THEN I BEGAN TO DRAW CARICATURES OF THE TEACHERS. I HAD GOTTEN INTO THIS HABIT WITH MY TEACHERS IN IRAN.



THE DIFFERENCE BEING THAT THEY WERE ALL VEILED, THEREFORE MUCH EASIER TO DRAW.

THESE PORTRAITS ALSO BROUGHT ME SOME GOODWILL.



BESIDES, MY MISTAKES IN FRENCH MADE ME SOMEONE OF INTEREST. IT HAD BEEN THREE YEARS SINCE I'D PRACTICED MY FRENCH, AFTER THE CLOSING OF THE BILINGUAL SCHOOLS BY THE ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT.

WHAT DO YOU CALL THAT THING, YOU KNOW, LIKE A RULER?*

WHAT THING?



OH, THAT THING! YOU KNOW, A DICK!

OH, RIGHT! WE CALL IT A DICK.

A DICK?



CAN YOU LEND ME YOUR DICK?

?!!

HA! HA! HA! HA!



WELL, AT LEAST I EXISTED.

* I MEANT A TRIANGLE.

THINGS EVOLVED. AFTER SOME TIME, JULIE, THE SULLEN GIRL IN THE SECOND ROW, TOOK AN INTEREST IN ME. SHE WAS AN EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD FRENCH GIRL, IN A CLASS WHERE THE AVERAGE AGE WAS FOURTEEN.



I UNDERSTOOD LATER THAT HER RESERVE CAME FROM THE FACT THAT SHE CONSIDERED THE OTHERS TO BE SPOILED CHILDREN. BUT I WAS DIFFERENT. I HAD KNOWN WAR.

SHE INTRODUCED ME TO MOMO. HE WAS TWO YEARS OLDER.



YOU'VE ALREADY SEEN LOTS OF DEAD PEOPLE?



MOMO GREETED PEOPLE IN HIS OWN WAY.



SO IT WAS HE WHO KISSED ME ON THE MOUTH FOR THE FIRST TIME.



... THROUGH MOMO, I GOT TO KNOW THIERRY AND OLIVIER, TWO SWISS ORPHANS WHO WERE LIVING IN AUSTRIA WITH THEIR UNCLE, A DIPLOMAT.



THE FACT THAT I WAS LIVING WITHOUT MY PARENTS ALSO SUITED JULIE.

AN ECCENTRIC, A PUNK, TWO ORPHANS AND A THIRD-WORLDER, WE MADE QUITE A GROUP OF FRIENDS. THEY WERE REALLY INTERESTED IN MY STORY. ESPECIALLY MOMO! HE WAS FASCINATED BY DEATH.





FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1984. THE STREETS WERE PACKED. THE HOLIDAY FRENZY HAD INFECTED EVERYONE. I THOUGHT OF THIERRY WHEN HE TALKED ABOUT IT BEING "GOOD FOR BUSINESS."



MY STREET, THOUGH, WAS DESERTED. THERE WEREN'T ANY STORES.



WHEN I GOT BACK, I FOUND LUCIA. STILL FAITHFUL TO HER POST.





LUCIA'S PARENTS WERE INCREDIBLE. THEY WERE UNLIKE ANYONE I'D EVER MET. HER TYROLEAN AUSTRIAN FATHER WORE PANTS MADE OF LEATHER. HER TYROLEAN ITALIAN MOTHER HAD A MUSTACHE. ONLY HER SISTER REMINDED ME OF HEIDI.



AFTEKH DINNEKH, WE AKH GOING TO CHUKKH.

JA!

AAA...



THEIR GERMAN WAS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND.

AND INDEED WE WENT TO CHURCH FOR MIDNIGHT MASS.



IT ENDED AT THREE IN THE MORNING!

LUCIA'S FAMILY HAD NEVER SEEN ANY IRANIANS. I WAS THEREFORE INVITED OVER EVERY DAY BY AN UNCLE AND AN AUNT WHO WANTED TO GET TO KNOW ME.



MY GERMAN WAS RUDIMENTARY, THEIRS UNUSUAL. A COUSIN WHO HAD SPENT FOUR YEARS IN FRANCOPHONE SWITZERLAND ENJOYED ACTING AS MY TRANSLATOR.



AS OPPOSED TO MY SCHOOL FRIENDS' FAVORITE SUBJECTS OF CONVERSATION, WE NEVER TOUCHED ON WAR, OR DEATH.



I HAD A NEW SET OF PARENTS ..



* DEAR



PASTA



SO THEY WENT OFF SKIING AND I SET MYSELF TO READING. I STARTED WITH BAKUNIN. I LEARNED THAT HE WAS RUSSIAN, THAT HE HAD BEEN EXCLUDED FROM THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL* AND THAT HE REJECTED ALL AUTHORITY, ESPECIALLY THAT OF THE STATE.



ASIDE FROM THAT, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND MUCH OF HIS PHILOSOPHY, AS SURELY MOMO DIDN'T EITHER.

* FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF COMMUNIST COOPERATORS.

THEN, I STUDIED THE HISTORY OF THE COMMUNE.



I CONCLUDED THAT THE FRENCH RIGHT OF THIS EPOCH WERE WORTHY OF MY COUNTRY'S FUNDAMENTALISTS.

THEN, I TURNED MY ATTENTION TO SARTRE, MY COMRADES' FAVORITE AUTHOR.

"THE NOTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS COMES FROM MAN'S LIVED EXPERIENCE."



I FOUND HIM A LITTLE ANNOYING...

WHEN I'D HAD ENOUGH OF READING, I WENT TO THE SUPERMARKET.



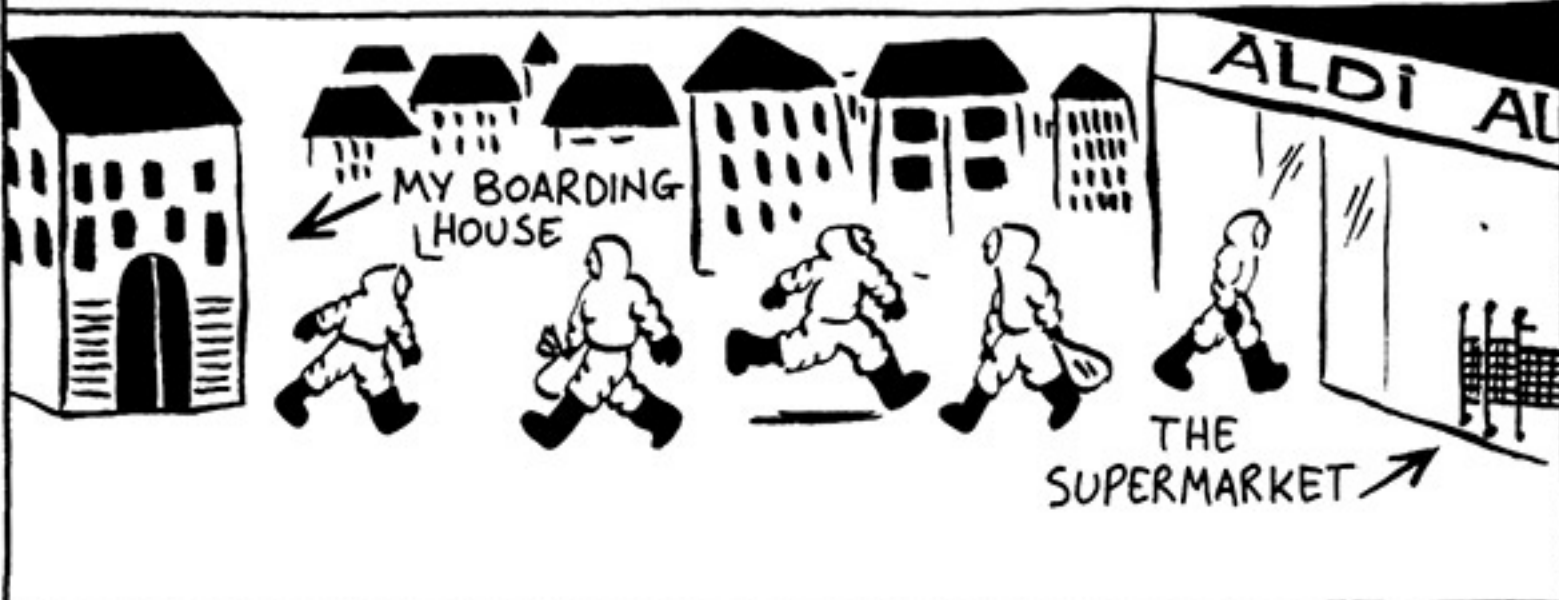
IT WAS SO COLD THAT I HAD THE BRIGHT IDEA OF WEARING MY SKI SUIT, BROUGHT FROM TEHRAN, TO GO OUT.



DECKED OUT LIKE THIS IN VIENNA, I FELT LIKE I WAS ON THE SLOPES OF INNSBRUCK, CLOSE TO MY FRIENDS.



I WAS SO BORED THAT TO BUY FOUR DIFFERENT PRODUCTS, I WOULD GO TO THE SUPERMARKET AT LEAST FOUR TIMES.



IF I'D HAD ANYTHING FUN TO DO, I DON'T THINK I WOULD EVER HAVE READ AS MUCH AS I DID.

TO EDUCATE MYSELF, I HAD TO UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING. STARTING WITH MYSELF, ME, MARJI, THE WOMAN. SO I THREW MYSELF INTO READING MY MOTHER'S FAVORITE BOOK.



I READ "THE SECOND SEX." SIMONE EXPLAINED THAT IF WOMEN PEED STANDING UP, THEIR PERCEPTION OF LIFE WOULD CHANGE.



SEATED, IT WAS MUCH SIMPLER. AND, AS AN IRANIAN WOMAN, BEFORE LEARNING TO URINATE LIKE A MAN, I NEEDED TO LEARN TO BECOME A LIBERATED AND EMANCIPATED WOMAN.



SO I TRIED. IT RAN LIGHTLY DOWN MY LEFT LEG. IT WAS A LITTLE DISGUSTING.

AND THEN CAME THE DAY. THE FAMOUS DAY IN THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY WHEN I WAS PREPARING MY ETERNAL SPAGHETTI.



I WAS VERY HUNGRY. SO HUNGRY THAT ONE PLATE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ENOUGH.



I WENT DOWNSTAIRS WITH MY POT TO WATCH TV IN THE REFECTORY.



I LOVED THAT. AT MY PARENTS' HOUSE, IT WAS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN. "INSPECTOR DERRICK" WAS ON. THE NUNS LIKED IT A LOT.



WHEN SUDDENLY THE MOTHER SUPERIOR BLOCKED MY LINE OF VISION.



BUT HERE, EVERYONE EATS WHILE WATCHING TV.

BUT NOT IN A POT! WHAT KIND OF MANNERS ARE THESE?



IT'S TRUE WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT IRANIANS. THEY HAVE NO EDUCATION.



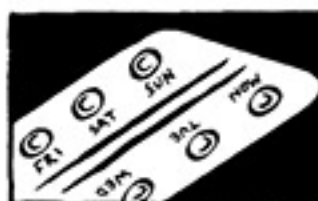
IT'S TRUE WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT YOU, TOO. YOU WERE ALL PROSTITUTES BEFORE BECOMING NUNS!



THE MOTHER SUPERIOR NO LONGER WANTED TO SEE ME, SO I WAS CALLED BEFORE HER ASSISTANT.







THE PILL

MY NEW HOME WAS A LOT MORE COMFORTABLE THAN THE BOARDING HOUSE. I SHARED JULIE'S ROOM.



WOULD YOU BELIEVE I HAVE A DATE WITH ERNST, THE OWNER OF CAFÉ SCHELTER.



BUT HOW OLD IS THIS OWNER?



YES ... MATURE, THE WAY I LIKE THEM.



OK, I'M OFF.

DID YOU DO YOUR HOMEWORK?



BYE, MOM!

JULIE, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?



AND THE SISTERS WHO FOUND ME INSOLENT ... IF ONLY THEY'D SEEN JULIE.

IN MY CULTURE, PARENTS WERE SACRED. WE AT LEAST OWED THEM AN ANSWER.

ARMELLE, WOULD YOU LIKE A CUP OF TEA?



TO BEHAVE LIKE THIS TOWARD ONE'S OWN MOTHER MADE ME INDIGNANT.









AND THE PARTY WAS NOT WHAT I IMAGINED. IN IRAN, AT PARTIES, EVERYONE WOULD DANCE AND EAT. IN VIENNA, PEOPLE PREFERRED TO LIE AROUND AND SMOKE.



AND THEN, I WAS TURNED OFF BY ALL THESE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT, I CAME FROM A TRADITIONALIST COUNTRY.

AROUND FOUR IN THE MORNING, THE LAST GUESTS FINALLY LEFT. I WAS SO SLEEPY.



I WANTED TO REMOVE MY MAKE-UP, BUT IT WASN'T COMING OFF WITH WATER.



I WENT TO ASK JULIE FOR SOME MAKEUP REMOVER, BUT APPARENTLY SHE AND ERNST WERE ALREADY ASLEEP IN OUR ROOM.



WHEN SUDDENLY



OH, OH, OH!
AH, AH!
OH YES!
OH! AH! YES!



MY GOD, THEY WERE IN THE MIDDLE OF ...



I RUSHED TO THE LIVING ROOM TO PROTECT MYSELF FROM I DON'T KNOW WHAT, BEHIND MY BEST FRIEND, A BOOK.



IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND A WORD I READ.



SEVERAL MINUTES LATER, I MADE OUT IN THE DARK THE SILHOUETTE OF A NAKED MAN,



FOLLOWED BY ONE OF A NAKED WOMAN,



THEN A MAN AND WOMAN HALF-NAKED!



I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EYES...







THE VEGETABLE

MY MENTAL TRANSFORMATION WAS FOLLOWED BY MY PHYSICAL METAMORPHOSIS.



BETWEEN THE AGES OF FIFTEEN AND SIXTEEN, I GREW SEVEN INCHES. IT WAS IMPRESSIVE.

ME AT FIFTEEN



ME AT SIXTEEN



MY HEAD ALSO CHANGED IN ITS OWN WAY. FIRST, MY FACE GOT LONGER.



THEN MY RIGHT EYE GREW,



FOLLOWED SWIFTLY BY MY CHIN WHICH DOUBLED IN LENGTH.



THEN IT WAS MY MOUTH,



MY RIGHT HAND,



MY LEFT FOOT.



(EVEN TODAY, IT'S HALF A SIZE BIGGER THAN MY RIGHT FOOT.)

OF COURSE MY NOSE TRIPLED ITS SIZE.



AND WAS DECORATED BY A LARGE BEAUTY MARK.



WHICH I THOUGHT HIDEOUS AT THE TIME.

THEN MY CHIN ADVANCED MAESTESTICALLY,



ONLY TO RETREAT TO ITS ORIGINAL POSITION SEVERAL MONTHS LATER.



FINALLY MY CHEST DEVELOPED



AND MY CENTER OF GRAVITY WAS BALANCED OUT BY THE POUNDS ON MY BUTT.



IN SHORT, I WAS IN AN UGLY STAGE SEEMINGLY WITHOUT END.

AS IF MY NATURAL DEFORMITY WASN'T ENOUGH, I TRIED A FEW NEW HAIRCUTS. A LITTLE SNIP OF THE SCISSORS ON THE LEFT.



AND A WEEK LATER, A LITTLE SNIP OF THE SCISSORS ON THE RIGHT.



I LOOKED LIKE COSETTE IN "LES MISÉRABLES."



SO I COATED MY HAIR WITH GEL,



I ADDED A THICK LINE OF EYELINER,



A FEW SAFETY PINS,



WHICH WERE REPLACED BY A SCARF. IT SOFTENED THE LOOK.



IT WAS BEGINNING TO LOOK LIKE SOMETHING.

HAVE YOU SEEN HOW BEAUTIFUL SHE IS NOW?



TO MY ENORMOUS SURPRISE, MY NEW LOOK EVEN PLEASED THE HALL MONITORS. IT SHOULD BE SAID THAT THEY WERE VERY YOUNG.

YOU CHANGE YOUR HAIRSTYLE EVERY DAY. WHO CUTS YOUR HAIR?

I DO.

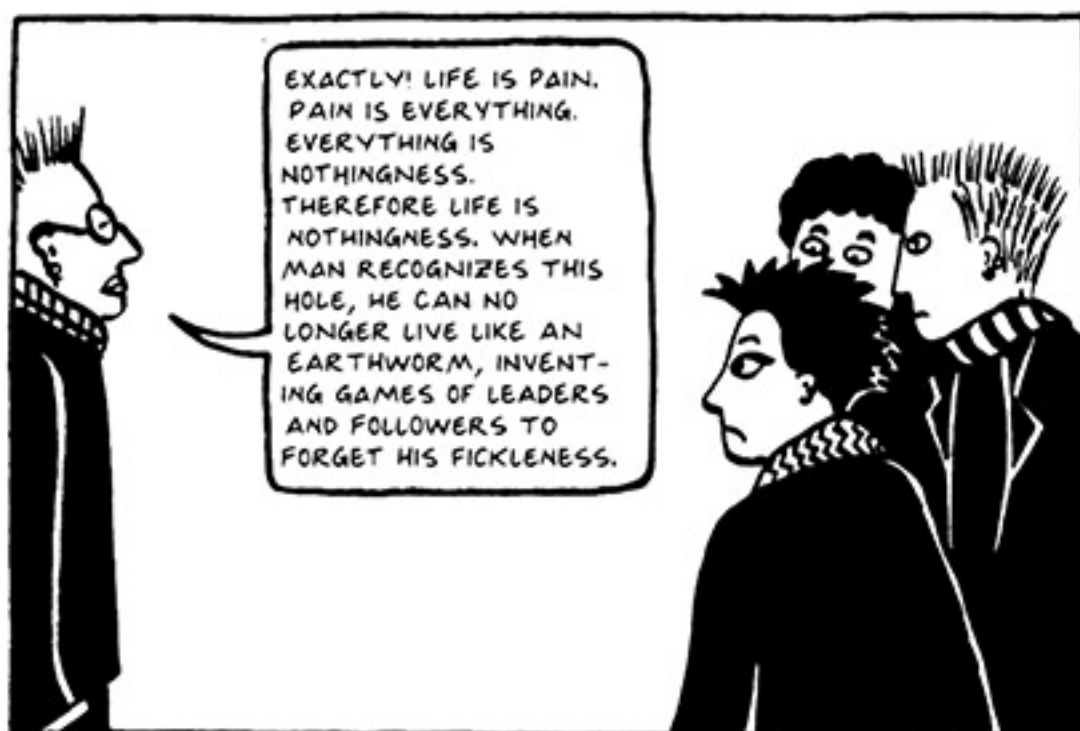
IF I PAY YOU, WILL YOU CUT MY HAIR, TOO?



THAT'S HOW I BECAME THE SCHOOL'S OFFICIAL HAIRCUTTER.



IT HELPED ME EARN A LITTLE SPENDING MONEY.



IT WAS ALWAYS THIERRY WHO ROLLED THE JOINTS WHILE WE KEPT AN EYE OUT FOR THE MONITORS SO WE WOULDN'T BE CAUGHT BY SURPRISE.



HERE!



I DIDN'T LIKE TO SMOKE, BUT I DID IT OUT OF SOLIDARITY. AT THE TIME, TO ME, GRASS AND HEROIN WERE THE SAME THING.

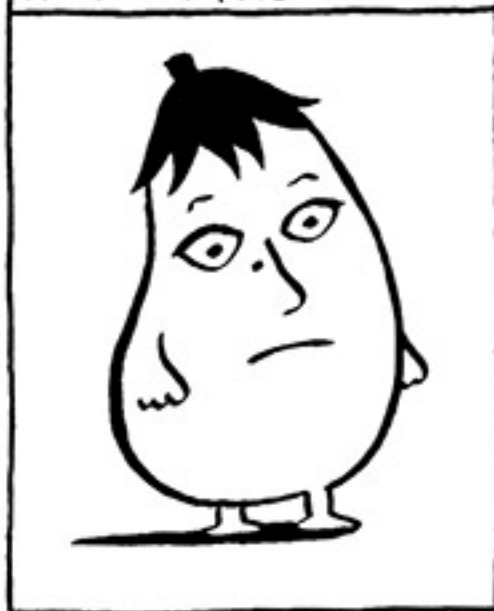
EACH TIME I WAS OFFERED A JOINT, I REMEMBERED THIS CONVERSATION MY PARENTS HAD ABOUT MY COUSIN KAMRAN.

POOR BOY, HE'S STUCK HIMSELF SO MANY TIMES HE'S BEGUN TO LOOK LIKE A VEGETABLE.

THIS KIND OF THING ALWAYS HAPPENS TO THE MOST FRAGILE ONES.



BECOMING A VEGETABLE WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION.



SO I PRETENDED TO PARTICIPATE, BUT I NEVER INHALED THE SMOKE.



AND AS SOON AS MY FRIENDS' BACKS WERE TURNED, I STUCK MY FINGERS IN MY EYES TO MAKE THEM GOOD AND RED.



THEN, I IMITATED THEIR LAUGHTER.



I WAS QUITE BELIEVABLE.

THE HARDER I TRIED TO ASSIMILATE, THE MORE I HAD THE FEELING THAT I WAS DISTANCING MYSELF FROM MY CULTURE, BETRAYING MY PARENTS AND MY ORIGINS, THAT I WAS PLAYING A GAME BY SOMEBODY ELSE'S RULES.



EACH TELEPHONE CALL FROM MY PARENTS REMINDED ME OF MY COWARDICE AND MY BETRAYAL. I WAS AT ONCE HAPPY TO HEAR THEIR VOICES AND ASHAMED TO TALK TO THEM.

- YES, I'M DOING FINE. I'M GETTING GOOD GRADES.
- FRIENDS? OF COURSE, LOTS!
- DAD ...
- DAD, I LOVE YOU!

- YOU HAVE SOME GOOD FRIENDS?
- THAT DOESN'T SURPRISE ME, YOU ALWAYS HAD A TALENT FOR COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE!
- EAT ORANGES. THEY'RE FULL OF VITAMIN C.
- US TOO, WE ADORE YOU. YOU'RE THE CHILD ALL PARENTS DREAM OF HAVING!



IF ONLY THEY KNEW ... IF THEY KNEW THAT THEIR DAUGHTER WAS MADE UP LIKE A PUNK, THAT SHE SMOKED JOINTS TO MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION, THAT SHE HAD SEEN MEN IN THEIR UNDERWEAR WHILE THEY WERE BEING BOMBED EVERY DAY, THEY WOULDN'T CALL ME THEIR DREAM CHILD.

I FELT SO GUILTY THAT WHENEVER THERE WAS NEWS ABOUT IRAN, I CHANGED THE CHANNEL.



IT WAS TOO UNBEARABLE.



DID YOU WATCH TV YESTERDAY? YOU MUST BE WORRIED.

NO, IT'S OKAY! I TALKED TO MY PARENTS. THEY'RE FINE.



I WAS LYING. I KNEW NOTHING AND I DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW MORE.

I WANTED TO FORGET EVERYTHING, TO MAKE MY PAST DISAPPEAR, BUT MY UNCONSCIOUS CAUGHT UP WITH ME.



I EVEN MANAGED TO DENY MY NATIONALITY.



DURING A PARTY AT SCHOOL.



HI, I'M MARC. I GRADUATED LAST YEAR. YOU'RE NEW! WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

MARJANE. I'VE BEEN HERE A YEAR.

AND WHERE ARE YOU FROM MARIE-JEANNE?

I'M FRENCH.

OH REALLY? YOU HAVE A FUNNY ACCENT FOR A FRENCH GIRL.

OH! I HAVE TO FIND MY FRIENDS. BYE.



I SHOULD SAY THAT AT THE TIME, IRAN WAS THE EPITOME OF EVIL AND TO BE IRANIAN WAS A HEAVY BURDEN TO BEAR.



IT WAS EASIER TO LIE THAN TO ASSUME THAT BURDEN.

WHO'S THAT GUY?

MARC? HE'S ANNA'S BROTHER, THE GIRL IN THE STRIPED SWEATER. HE'S A JERK FROM BOURGE. YOU SHOULDN'T TALK TO THOSE PEOPLE.



AND WHEN I GOT BACK THAT NIGHT, I REMEMBERED THAT LINE MY GRANDMOTHER TOLD ME: "ALWAYS KEEP YOUR DIGNITY AND BE TRUE TO YOURSELF!"

OH GRANDMA ...









THE HORSE

JULIE AND HER MOTHER HAD LEFT VIENNA. NOW I WAS LIVING IN A WOHNUNGEMEINSCHAFT. THE WOHNUNGEMEINSCHAFT IS A COMMUNAL APARTMENT. I COULD STAY FOR FOUR MONTHS.



IT WAS FULL OF LIGHT. I HAD A DOUBLE-BED, A BUREAU, AND A DESK. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME I HAD MY OWN SPACE.



MY EIGHT HOUSEMATES WERE EIGHT MEN, ALL HOMOSEXUALS.





EVEN THOUGH IT HAD BEEN NINETEEN MONTHS SINCE I HAD SEEN MY MOTHER, THE FIFTEEN DAYS OF WAITING WERE VERY LONG. THE DAY OF HER ARRIVAL, I BATHED LIKE NEVER BEFORE.



I IRONED MY CLOTHES FOR THE FIRST TIME,



I MADE MYSELF AS BEAUTIFUL AS I COULD BEFORE GOING TO MEET HER AT THE AIRPORT.



I SAW FROM AFAR A WOMAN WHO LOOKED LIKE HER, THE SAME SILHOUETTE, THE SAME WALK, BUT WITH GRAY HAIR. MY MOTHER WAS A BRUNETTE.



WHEN THIS WOMAN GOT CLOSE, THERE WASN'T ANY DOUBT. IT WAS REALLY HER. BEFORE I LEFT HOME, MOM ONLY HAD A FEW GRAY HAIRS. IT'S INCREDIBLE WHAT TIME DOES TO YOU.



I DIDN'T KNOW IF SHE HADN'T RECOGNIZED ME, OR HADN'T HEARD ME.

IN ANY CASE, SHE DIDN'T STOP.



MOM!

MARSI?



SHE HADN'T RECOGNIZED ME, AND WITH GOOD REASON: I'D ALMOST DOUBLED IN HEIGHT AND SIZE.

OH MY DEAR, YOU ARE SO TALL!

DUTY FREE

MOM! MOM, YOU'VE GONE GRAY!



IT FELT STRANGE TO TAKE HER IN MY ARMS. OUR PROPORTIONS HAD BEEN REVERSED.



RECOUNTING NINETEEN MONTHS IN A FEW DAYS ISN'T EASY. WE HAD TO TALK A LOT TO MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME. OUR CONVERSATIONS WERE ALWAYS DISJOINTED.

TELL ME, HOW'S DAD? WHAT'S HE DOING?

OH, HE TAKES CARE OF THE GAS IN TEHRAN'S BUILDINGS.

IT FRUSTRATES HIM A LITTLE. YOU KNOW, YOUR FATHER SPECIALIZED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF STEEL FACTORIES, BUT DURING WARTIME THERE'S NO POINT IN BUILDING.

IS HE HAPPY ANYWAY?

YES, HE'S OKAY. HE MISSES YOU ENORMOUSLY, BUT HE'S HAPPY THAT YOU'RE LIVING HERE, FAR FROM THE PROBLEMS.

MOM, WHERE'S YOUR NECKLACE?

MY MOTHER ALWAYS WORE A GOLDEN PENDANT THAT DAD HAD GIVEN HER FOR THEIR TENTH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.

I LEFT IT IN IRAN. YOU SEE, WE DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO TAKE ANYTHING OF VALUE OUT OF THE COUNTRY.

I LEARNED LATER THAT SHE HAD LIED TO ME.

YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT I MADE?

NO, NO, I LOVE IT. I'M JUST NOT VERY HUNGRY.

HERE - A LETTER FROM YOUR FATHER. I'M NOT THE ONE WHO OPENED IT, IT'S THE CUSTOMS IN TEHRAN. THEY CHECK EVERYTHING!

IN THE LETTER, HE WAS OVERJOYED BY THE THOUGHT THAT I HAD A PEACEFUL LIFE IN VIENNA.

IF YOU ONLY KNEW...

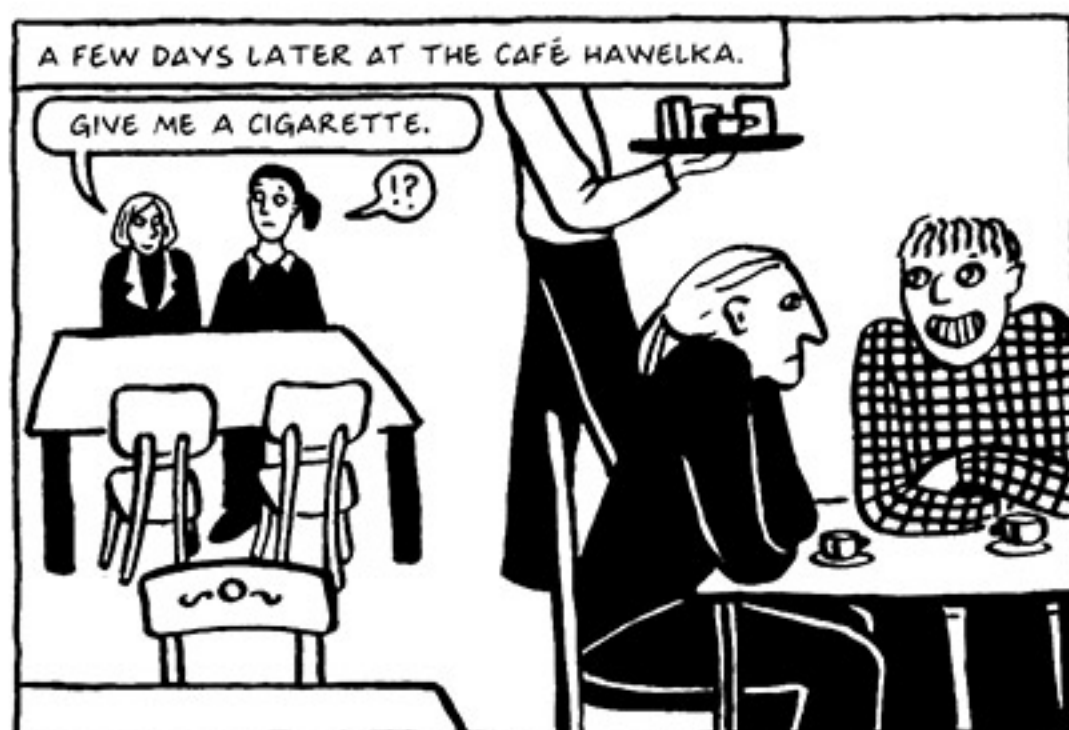
I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT HE DIDN'T REALIZE WHAT I WAS ENDURING.

THERE AGAIN, SHE WAS LYING. AFTER THIS DAY, SHE NEVER AGAIN LET ME DO THE COOKING.



* A MOUNTAINOUS CITY NORTH OF TEHRAN.







* SHE'S SO FAT!



* 150 DOLLARS.



I SPENT TWENTY-SEVEN DAYS BY HER SIDE. I TASTED THE HEAVENLY FOOD OF MY COUNTRY, PREPARED BY MY MOTHER. IT WAS A CHANGE FROM PASTA.



SHE STROKED MY HAIR EVERY NIGHT TO PUT ME TO SLEEP.



IT RELAXED ME TO TALK TO HER. IT HAD BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'D BEEN ABLE TO TALK TO SOMEONE WITHOUT HAVING TO EXPLAIN MY CULTURE.



THE EVE OF HER DEPARTURE.

MY DEAR, YOU WON'T INSULT DR. HELLER, RIGHT?

I PROMISE.



BUY YOURSELF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. YOU MUST EAT WELL. IT'S NOT FOR NOTHING THAT WE SAY "A HEALTHY MIND IN A HEALTHY BODY!"



LOOK! I MADE SOME SKETCHES INSPIRED BY OUR WINDOW-SHOPPING. I'LL MAKE YOU SOME OUTFITS. YOU'RE IN NEED OF SOME NEW ONES.



EVER SINCE MY ARRIVAL IN AUSTRIA, I HADN'T BOUGHT MYSELF ANYTHING AND, GIVEN MY GROWTH SPURT, MY CLOTHES NO LONGER FIT ME.

THEN CAME THE DREADED DAY OF DEPARTURE. I WAS SAD BUT, WELL, I'D BEGUN TO GET USED TO SEPARATIONS.



MY MOTHER LEFT.



I'M SURE THAT SHE UNDERSTOOD THE MISERY OF MY ISOLATION EVEN IF SHE KEPT A STRAIGHT FACE AND GAVE NOTHING AWAY. SHE LEFT ME WITH A BAG OF AFFECTION THAT SUSTAINED ME FOR SEVERAL MONTHS.

HIDE AND SEEK

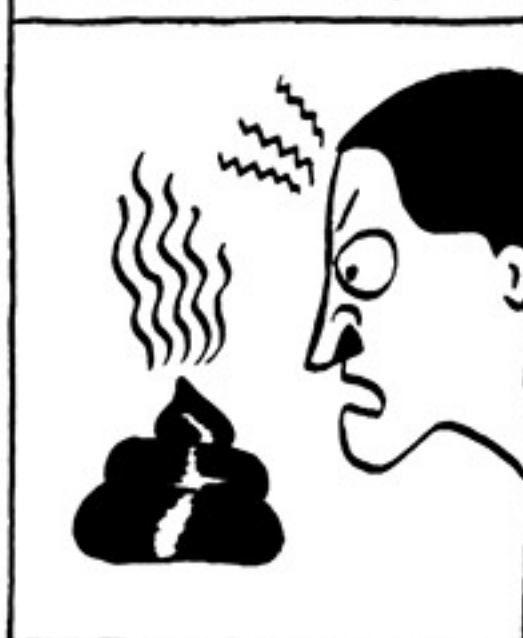
FRAU DOCTOR HELLER'S HOUSE WAS AN OLD VILLA, BUILT BY HER FATHER, A 1930S SCULPTOR OF SOME RENOWN. THE BIG TERRACE THAT LOOKED OUT ON THE GARDEN WAS MY FAVORITE PLACE. I SPENT SOME VERY PLEASANT MOMENTS THERE.



ONLY THE EXCREMENT OF VICTOR, FRAU DOCTOR HELLER'S DOG, DISTURBED THIS HARMONY.



ON AVERAGE, HE DEFECATED ONCE A WEEK ON MY BED.



DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA? IT'S THE FIFTH TIME IN A MONTH! IT'S UNACCEPTABLE! WHY DON'T YOU TRAIN HIM?

YES, WELL! I'M GOING TO HAVE THE SHEETS CHANGED.



I OFTEN FORGOT THAT HE WAS TOO OLD TO LEARN ANYTHING.



ALL MY FRIENDS HAD LEFT OUR SCHOOL. JULIE WAS IN SPAIN, THIERRY AND OLIVIER HAD GONE BACK TO SWITZERLAND AND MOMO HAD BEEN EXPELLED. I WAS ALONE AT SCHOOL, BUT I DIDN'T CARE.



MY LACK OF INTEREST IN OTHERS MADE ME MORE INTERESTING.

HOW'S IT GOING, MARJANE?

FINE, FINE!

EVER SINCE I'D SEEN MY MOTHER, I DIDN'T NEED ANYONE.

WELL, ALMOST.

DO YOU WANT TO WALK HOME TOGETHER?

NO. MY BOYFRIEND'S COMING TO GET ME.



HIS NAME WAS ENRIQUE. I'D MET HIM THROUGH DIETER, ONE OF MY FORMER HOUSEMATES.



ENRIQUE WAS HALF-AUSTRIAN, HALF-SPANISH.

WHAT DO YOU SAY ABOUT GOING TO AN ANARCHIST PARTY THIS WEEKEND?

OF COURSE! I'D LOVE TO.



ENRIQUE WAS TWENTY AND PLAYED THE PIANO.

I LIKED HIM A LOT.

THERE'LL BE ABOUT TWENTY OF US, IT'LL BE COOL.

DO YOU KNOW ALL OF THEM?

YES.

LEARNING THAT HE KNEW REAL ANARCHISTS ONLY INTENSIFIED MY FEELINGS FOR HIM.

"A REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISTS' PARTY!" IT REMINDED ME OF THE COMMITMENT AND THE BATTLES OF MY CHILDHOOD IN IRAN. EVEN BETTER, IT WOULD PERHAPS ALLOW ME TO BETTER UNDERSTAND BAKUNIN.



FINALLY THE BIG DAY ARRIVED.



AFTER AN HOUR AND A HALF ON THE ROAD, WE ARRIVED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FOREST.

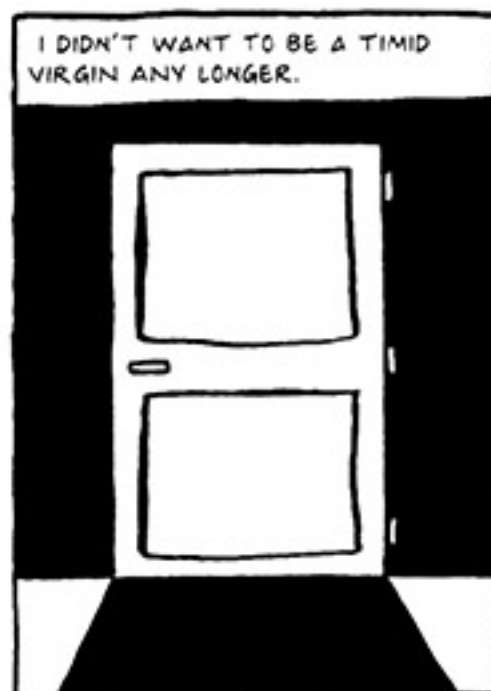


IN THE DISTANCE I SAW A GROUP OF ADULTS CHASING ONE ANOTHER AND SHOUTING:



WHAT A DISAPPOINTMENT... MY ENTHUSIASM WAS QUICKLY REPLACED BY A FEELING OF DISGUST AND PROFOUND CONTEMPT.









I LOST TOUCH WITH ENRIQUE BUT HIS ANARCHIST FRIENDS ADOPTED ME. MY LIFE WAS SPLIT BETWEEN THEM, MY SCHOOL, AND FRAU DOCTOR HELLER'S HOUSE.



THE COMMUNAL LIFE WENT HAND IN HAND WITH THE USE OF ALL KINDS OF MOOD ENHANCERS: WEED, HASH,...



I TRIPPED EVERY WEEKEND, AND YOU COULD SEE IT ON MY FACE.

MY PHYSICS TEACHER, YONNEL ARROUAS, WAS WORRIED ABOUT ME.

MARJANE, ARE YOU OKAY? YOU CAN TALK TO ME IF YOU'D LIKE.



AT HOME, THERE'S A WAR. I'M SCARED FOR MY PARENTS. I'M ALONE AND I FEEL GUILTY. I DON'T HAVE MUCH MONEY. MY UNCLE WAS ASSASSINATED. I SAW MY NEIGHBOR DIE IN A BOMBING...



I SENSED THAT HE DIDN'T BELIEVE ME. HE MUST HAVE THOUGHT THAT I WAS EXAGGERATING.

I PERSISTED ANYWAY. I NEEDED TO TALK SO MUCH.

THEN, I LIVE IN THIS CRAZY WOMAN'S HOUSE, MY BOYFRIEND...

ENOUGH, IT'S OKAY. WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME OVER FOR LUNCH AT OUR HOUSE ON SATURDAY? MY MOTHER WILL BE THERE, TOO.



I ACCEPTED.

AT HIS HOUSE, I PLAYED WITH HIS TWINS, JOHANNA AND CAROLINE.



I SPENT A LONG TIME TALKING TO MRS. ARROUAS, MY TEACHER'S MOTHER, A FRENCHWOMAN OF JEWISH-MOROCCAN ORIGINS.

I UNDERSTAND HOW HARD IT IS FOR YOU. YOU HAVE TO MAKE THREE TIMES THE EFFORT OF ANYONE ELSE TO SUCCEED! THAT'S THE IMMIGRANT LOT!! IT WAS THE SAME FOR ME, WHEN I ARRIVED IN FRANCE.



BE STRONG. ALL WILL GO WELL FOR YOU. I HOPE TO SEE YOU SOON.



BUT WE NEVER SAW EACH OTHER AGAIN. YONNEL'S WIFE DIDN'T LIKE ME. SHE MUST HAVE THOUGHT THAT I WAS MAKING UP STORIES. SO I WAS NEVER AGAIN INVITED OVER.







I DIDN'T ALWAYS LIKE IT, BUT I BY FAR PREFERRED BORING MYSELF WITH HER TO HAVING TO CONFRONT MY SOLITUDE AND MY DISAPPOINTMENTS.

LITTLE BY LITTLE, I BECAME THE PORTRAIT OF DORIAN GRAY. THE MORE TIME PASSED, THE MORE I WAS MARKED.



BUT THIS KIND OF DECADENCE WAS PLEASING TO SOME. AND THAT'S HOW I MET THE FIRST GREAT LOVE OF MY LIFE.

HEY! MARJANE!



HIS NAME WAS MARKUS. HE WAS STUDYING LITERATURE. AT LEAST I WAS SURE THAT HE DIDN'T WANT TO SEE ME BECAUSE OF HIS MATH PROBLEMS.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING ON SATURDAY?

I'M GOING TO SEE MY FRIENDS IN THE COUNTRY. WHY?



DO YOU WANT TO GO TO A CLUB?

SURE, WHY NOT?



THIS TIME I DIDN'T MAKE ANY EFFORT AT ALL: I DIDN'T PUT ON MY BEST CLOTHES AND I ARRIVED AN HOUR LATE.

I HAD GIVEN UP. I THOUGHT THAT YOU WOULDN'T COME. I'M HAPPY THAT YOU'RE HERE. DO YOU WANT TO DANCE?



NO, I DON'T LIKE DANCING. ACTUALLY, I DON'T LIKE CLUBS.

WE DANCED ANYWAY.

YOU'RE SO BEAUTIFUL TONIGHT!

WHAT A LIAR.



ASIDE FROM THE FACT THAT WE WERE BOTH ONLY CHILDREN, WE DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING IN COMMON. I WAS UNCOMFORTABLE.

HAPPILY, THIS PATHETIC SITUATION DIDN'T LAST LONG. THE CLUB CLOSED AT 2:30 IN THE MORNING.

IF YOU WANT, I CAN TAKE YOU HOME, BUT I NEED TO FILL UP FIRST. SHALL WE SPLIT IT?

OKAY.



NOTHING SURPRISED ME ANYMORE. EVEN PAYING FOR GAS SO THAT MY WHITE KNIGHT COULD DRIVE ME HOME SEEMED COMPLETELY NORMAL.

YOU KNOW WHAT I LOVE ABOUT YOU, YOUR REBELLIOUS SIDE AND YOUR NATURAL NONCHALANCE.

THANKS



THEN...



THINGS ALWAYS HAPPEN WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT. IT WAS HAPPINESS.

I FINALLY HAD A REAL BOYFRIEND. I WAS OVER THE MOON. ONE NIGHT AT MARKUS' HOUSE,

I'M GOING TO WRITE A PLAY.

OH YEAH, I'D LOVE TO BE IN IT.



WHEN SUDDENLY,

WAS MACHT SIE HIER?
SIE MUß RAUS GEHEN!



IT WAS HIS MOTHER. MARKUS DIDN'T HAVE A FATHER. SHE THOUGHT I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND GERMAN. SHE WAS SAYING THAT I HAD TO GO "RAUS," OUTSIDE.

I'D ALREADY HEARD THIS THREATENING WORD YELLED AT ME IN THE METRO.

DU SCHEIß AUSLÄNDERIN!
GEH RAUS!



IT WAS AN OLD MAN WHO SAID "DIRTY FOREIGNER, GET OUT!" I HAD HEARD IT ANOTHER TIME IN THE STREET. BUT I TRIED TO MAKE LIGHT OF IT. I THOUGHT THAT IT WAS JUST THE REACTION OF A NASTY OLD MAN.

BUT THIS, THIS WAS DIFFERENT. IT WAS NEITHER AN OLD MAN DESTROYED BY THE WAR, NOR A YOUNG IDIOT. IT WAS MY BOYFRIEND'S MOTHER WHO ATTACKED ME. SHE WAS SAYING THAT I WAS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF MARKUS AND HIS SITUATION TO OBTAIN AN AUSTRIAN PASSPORT, THAT I WAS A WITCH.



I THINK SHE'D NEVER LOOKED AT HERSELF IN THE MIRROR.

LAß UNS IN RUHE!



SHE ORDERED ME TO LEAVE THEM ALONE, HER AND HER SON.

RAUS! ICH SAGE RAUS!!



THEN THREW ME OUT.

GO ON HOME. I'LL COME SEE YOU TOMORROW AT YOUR HOUSE.



MARKUS MUST HAVE BEEN SUFFERING MORE THAN I. HE HAD TO SACRIFICE HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS MOTHER TO CONTINUE TO SEE ME. I DIDN'T WANT TO ADD TO IT. SO I SAID NOTHING ...



• THIS ISN'T A BORDELLO.



* I HAD JUST READ HIS THREE ESSAYS ON THE THEORY OF SEXUALITY.



MARKUS AND I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO GO. WE OFTEN ENDED UP IN HIS CAR, WHERE WE SMOKED JOINTS TO DISTRACT OURSELVES.

LISTEN, I HEARD OF A CAFÉ WHERE WE CAN BUY CHEAP HASH. DO YOU WANT TO GO SEE? I CAN'T FIND ANYWHERE TO PARK.

OF COURSE!

HERE'S 200 SHILLINGS.



NO, IT'S OKAY, I'VE GOT MONEY.

I WENT IN. I WAS VERY, VERY SCARED. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT I'D SET FOOT IN SUCH A SORDID PLACE.



BUT IT WASN'T A BIG DEAL. AFTER ALL, I WAS DOING IT FOR LOVE.



EXCUSE ME, I WANT TWO BAGS FOR 200 BUCKS.



FOLLOW ME.



HERE.

THANKS.



MARKUS WAS PROUD OF ME. SO PROUD THAT HE TOLD THE WHOLE SCHOOL THAT HIS GIRLFRIEND HAD CONTACTS AT CAFÉ CAMERA.



THIS IS HOW, FOR LOVE, I BEGAN MY CAREER AS A DRUG DEALER. HADN'T I FOLLOWED MY MOTHER'S ADVICE? TO GIVE THE BEST OF MYSELF? I WAS NO LONGER A SIMPLE JUNKIE, BUT MY SCHOOL'S OFFICIAL DEALER.



THE CROISSANT

LUCKILY, I HAD BENEFITED ENOUGH FROM A SOLID EDUCATION TO NEVER DRIFT TOO FAR. IT WAS THE END OF MY LAST YEAR. I WAS GOING TO TAKE THE FRENCH BACCALAUREATE.



WHEN I STUDIED WITH THE OTHERS, I REALIZED THAT I HAD MANY GAPS. I NEEDED A MIRACLE TO PASS.

AND THIS MIRACLE HAPPENED ONE NIGHT IN JUNE, DURING MY SLEEP.



HEY, MARJI, THE SUBJECT ON THE BAC, IT WILL BE MONTESQUIEU'S "SLAVERY OF THE NEGROES."

THE NEXT MORNING I CALLED MY MOTHER,



WHO CALLED GOD, WHO IN TURN SENT HIS MESSAGE TO THE EXAMINER.



EACH TIME THAT I ASKED MY MOTHER TO PRAY FOR ME, MY WISH WAS GRANTED.

DO YOU LIKE THE 18TH CENTURY?

YES.



DO YOU LIKE MONTESQUIEU?

YES.



YOU HAVE THIRTY MINUTES TO PREPARE "SLAVERY OF THE NEGROES."



I GOT A 17, THE BEST GRADE IN SCHOOL.

THEN CAME SUMMER. TO BE TRUTHFUL, I WASN'T MAKING ANYTHING BY DEALING BECAUSE I WAS DOING IT AS A FAVOR. SO I SET OUT TO FIND SOME ODD JOBS.



IT WAS SOMETIMES BORING.



SOMETIMES FUN.



ONE DAY I SAW AN AD IN A NEWSPAPER: "CAFÉ SOLE IS LOOKING FOR A WAITRESS, THREE EUROPEAN LANGUAGES REQUIRED."



YOU SPEAK GERMAN, ENGLISH AND FRENCH. THAT'S GOOD. HAVE YOU EVER WORKED IN A BAR?

YES*

GOOD! YOU START TOMORROW. BUT WATCH OUT! THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT!!



CAFÉ SOLE WAS LOCATED IN THE BEST NEIGHBORHOOD IN VIENNA, I WAS PAID DECENTLY, BUT IT WASN'T ALWAYS EASY WITH THE CUSTOMERS. SOMETIMES, I REALLY WANTED TO SLAP THEM.



"THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT." "THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT"...

* I LIED.

NONETHELESS, I HAD AN ALLY. IT WAS SVETLANA, THE YUGOSLAVIAN CHEF.



WHAT'S THE MATTER, SWEETIE?

SOME MORON PINCHED MY BUTT.

TELL ME, WHAT DID HE ORDER, THIS SON-OF-A-BITCH?

A WIENER SCHNITZEL.



GOD FORGIVE ME!

RAAK PTOUH!

THERE! JUSTICE IS DONE.

SHE REALLY MADE ME LAUGH. THANKS TO HER, I WAS ABLE TO WORK THERE WITHOUT HAVING TO INJURE A FEW MEN WHERE IT COUNTS.



ADMITTEDLY, I WASN'T SELLING DRUGS ANYMORE, BUT I HAD STARTED TAKING MORE AND MORE. AT FIRST, MARKUS WAS VERY IMPRESSED,

ANOTHER ONE??
YOU'RE TOO STRONG!



THEN, HE STARTED TO LECTURE ME,

IN THE NAME OF GOD! LOOK AT WHAT YOU'RE BECOMING.



AND FINALLY, HE DISTANCED HIMSELF.



THIS DECADENT SIDE, WHICH HAD SO PLEASED HIM AT FIRST, ENDED UP PROFOUNDLY ANNOYING HIM.

I SHOULD SAY THAT I WAS SMOKING TOO MANY JOINTS. I WAS CONSTANTLY TIRED AND I OFTEN FELL ASLEEP.

THE DEFINITE INTEGRAL OF FUNCTION f ON ...



MARJANE, ARE YOU OKAY?



WHAT?

DO YOU FEEL WELL?



WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY, SIR? THAT I'M THE VEGETABLE THAT I REFUSED TO BECOME?



THAT I'M SO DISAPPOINTED IN MYSELF THAT I CAN NO LONGER LOOK AT MYSELF IN THE MIRROR? THAT I HATE MYSELF?...



EVERYTHING'S FINE, SIR. I'M A LITTLE SICK, I FEEL VERY TIRED.



I REMAINED IN THIS STATE FOR THE REST OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, BUT THANKS TO THE REGISTERED LETTERS, SENT TO GOD EVERY DAY BY MY MOTHER, I GRADUATED BY THE SKIN OF MY TEETH. I WAS RELIEVED.

IT WAS 1988. MARKUS HAD STARTED STUDYING THEATER. I HAD REGISTERED AT THE FACULTY OF TECHNOLOGY, BUT I NEVER WENT.



THIS SAME YEAR, I BECAME AWARE THAT THE PRESIDENT OF AUSTRIA WAS NAMED KURT WALDHEIM.



THROUGH MARKUS, I HAD GOTTEN TO KNOW SOME OTHER STUDENTS. WE WOULD OFTEN GET TOGETHER AT THE CAFÉ HAWELKA, WHERE WE DISCUSSED POLITICS.



WE SHOULDN'T EXAGGERATE. WALDHEIM WAS ELECTED A YEAR AND A HALF AGO. IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY RADICAL CHANGES, WE WOULD HAVE KNOWN.

HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT? WE'VE GONE FROM SOCIALISM TO NAZISM.



PERSONALLY, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THIS DIFFERENCE. THE FIRST TIME I SAW SKINHEADS WAS IN 1984. AT THE TIME, I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT IT MEANT. AND I DIDN'T SPEAK MUCH GERMAN. SO I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY WANTED WITH ME. I SENSED THAT THEY WERE HOSTILE, BUT HAVING GROWN UP WITH THE GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION, I KNEW WHAT TO DO IN THIS KIND OF SITUATION ...



I KEPT A LOW PROFILE.



SINCE THEN, I HADN'T NOTICED THEIR NUMBERS GROWING.

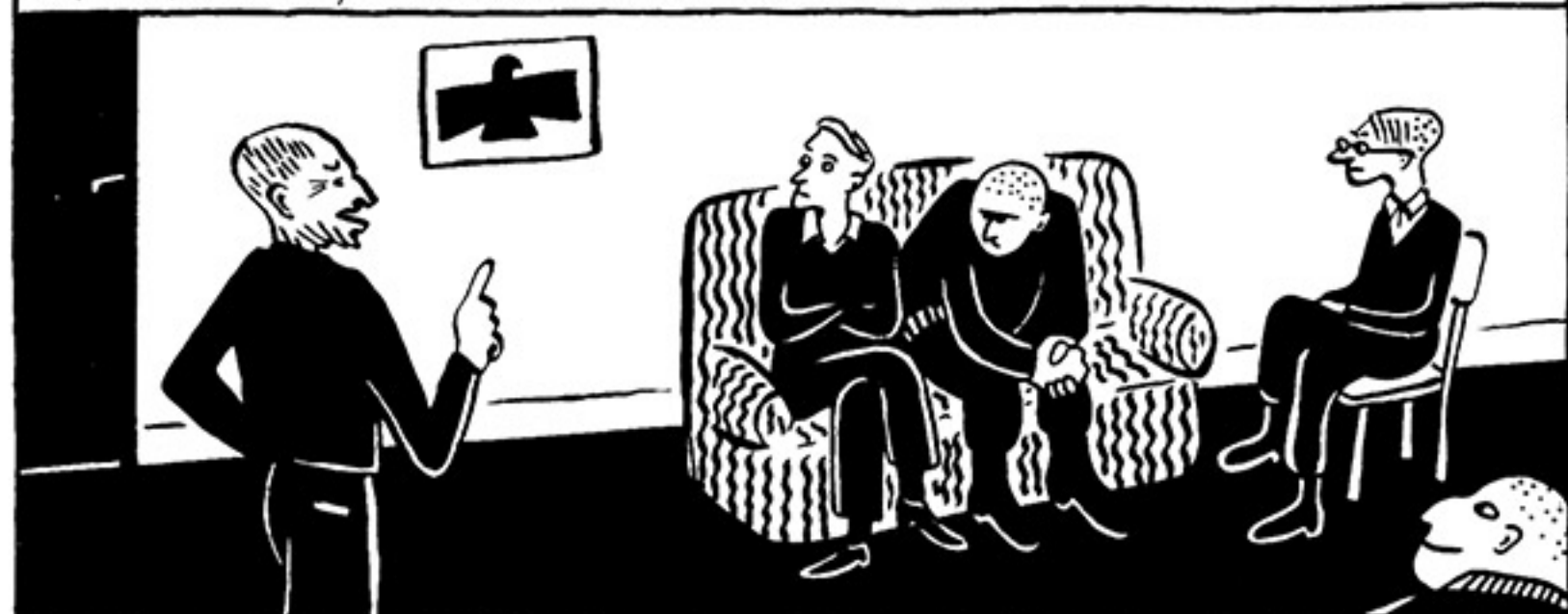
ASSHOLES, THEY'RE EVERYWHERE. YOU THINK THAT THERE AREN'T ANY WHERE I COME FROM? THEY'RE TEN TIMES MORE FEARSOME THAN YOURS. IN IRAN, THEY KILL THE PEOPLE WHO DON'T THINK LIKE THE LEADERS!



DURING THIS PERIOD, THE STUDENTS IN QUESTION, LIKE MOST YOUNG VIENNESE, WERE VERY POLITICIZED. THEY DEMONSTRATED EVERY SO OFTEN AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT IN POWER. SOMETIMES I JOINED THEM.



THEY SAID THAT THE OLD NAZIS HAD BEEN TEACHING "MEIN KAMPF" IN THEIR HOMES TO NEW NAZIS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE 80S, THAT SOON THERE WOULD BE A RISE IN THE EXTREME RIGHT THROUGHOUT EUROPE.



IT'S CRAZY HOW PEOPLE ARE ALL COWARDS. AND HERE WE ARE IN VIENNA. CAN YOU IMAGINE HOW IT MUST BE IN THE TYROL!!

BUT I'VE BEEN TO THE TYROL, I THOUGHT THEY WERE VERY NICE.



MY FRIEND'S FATHER EVEN MADE ME A FRAME ...



IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE A GIRL. IF YOU WERE A BOY WITH FRIZZY HAIR AND YOUR SKIN WAS A LITTLE DARKER, IT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN LIKE THAT.



I ASKED MYSELF IF THEY WOULD HAVE SAT BESIDE ME IF I HAD BEEN A FRIZZY-HAIRED AND DARK-SKINNED BOY?



NEVERTHELESS HE, LIKE I, TRIED TO SAVE OUR RELATIONSHIP. WE HAD BEEN TOGETHER ALMOST TWO YEARS. THE NIGHT BEFORE MY BIRTHDAY,

I'VE BEEN INVITED TO GRAZ BY A FRIEND.

THAT'S GOOD.

IT DOESN'T BOTHER YOU THAT I WON'T BE CELEBRATING MY BIRTHDAY WITH YOU?

NO, NOT AT ALL.

IT'LL BE GOOD FOR YOU.

IT WAS GOOD TIMING AFTER ALL. MAYBE THIS VACATION WAS GOING TO SAVE OUR RELATIONSHIP.

YOU'RE GOING TO MISS ME, YOU'LL SEE. . .

GOOD, I'M GOING TO SLEEP AT YOUR HOUSE TONIGHT. MY TRAIN IS AT 7:30 TOMORROW.

WAIT, YOU'RE CLOSER TO THE STATION THAN I AM. IF YOU COME OVER, YOU'LL MISS YOUR TRAIN.

YES, YOU'RE RIGHT!

WHEN YOU GET BACK, WE'LL CELEBRATE TOGETHER.

SO I SLEPT AT MY HOUSE AND
THE NEXT MORNING . . .



... I MISSED MY TRAIN.



THIS MUST BE DESTINY'S SIGN
THAT I SHOULD CELEBRATE
TURNING EIGHTEEN WITH HIM.



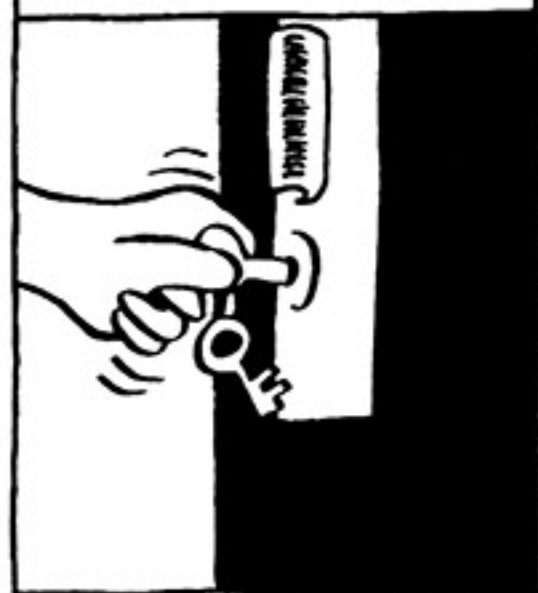
I HAD AN INGENIOUS IDEA: "I
AM GOING TO SURPRISE HIM
BY BRINGING HIM HOT
CROISSANTS."



OH YEAH,
I'M JUST TOO COOL!



I TURNED THE KEY IN THE
LOCK DELICATELY, NOT TO
WAKE HIM, TO BETTER
SURPRISE HIM.





IT WAS LIKE A BAD AMERICAN MOVIE. ONE OF THOSE FILMS WHERE THE SURPRISED MAN WRAPS HIMSELF IN A SHEET OUT OF MODESTY AND SAYS:

WAIT, I CAN EXPLAIN EVERYTHING!





THE VEIL

MY BREAKUP WITH MARKUS REPRESENTED MORE THAN A SIMPLE SEPARATION. I HAD JUST LOST MY ONE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT, THE ONLY PERSON WHO CARED FOR ME, AND TO WHOM I WAS ALSO WHOLLY ATTACHED.



I HAD NO FAMILY OR FRIENDS. I HAD COUNTED ON THIS RELATIONSHIP FOR EVERYTHING. THE WORLD HAD JUST CRUMBLLED IN FRONT OF MY EYES.



LEAVE ME ALONE, PLEASE!

OH NO, YOU CAN'T GET AWAY WITH THIS.



GO TO HELL, LEAVE! I DETEST YOU, I HATE YOU!



EVERYTHING REMINDED ME OF MARKUS. THIS BEDSPREAD, IT WAS HIS BIRTHDAY PRESENT TO ME.



THIS POSTER, HE BOUGHT IT FOR ME AT THE PICASSO SHOW AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART.



HIS T-SHIRT. OH, HIS T-SHIRT!

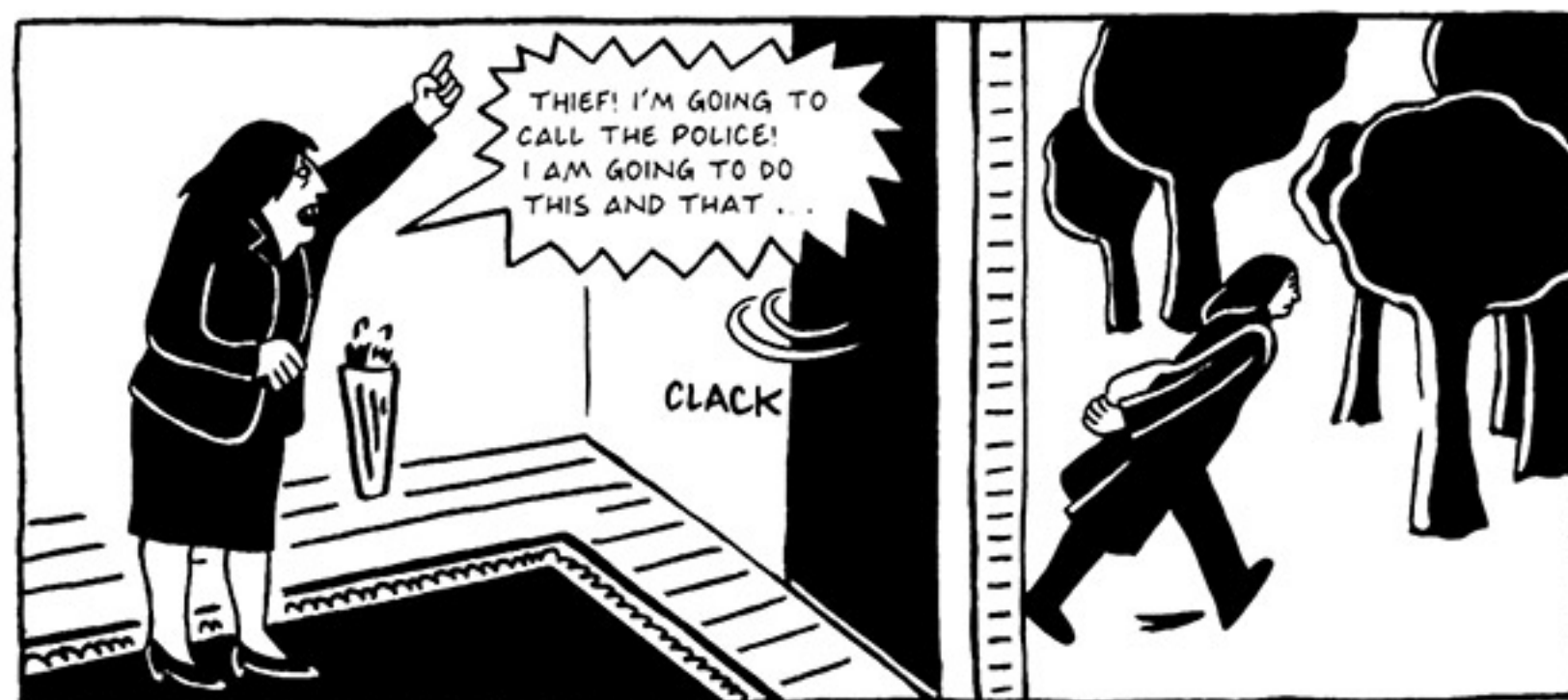


WHERE WAS MY MOTHER TO STROKE MY HAIR?

WHERE WAS MY GRANDMOTHER TO TELL ME THAT LOVERS, I WOULD HAVE THEM BY THE DOZEN?

WHERE WAS MY FATHER TO PUNISH THIS BOY WHO DARED HURT HIS DAUGHTER? WHERE?





IT WAS NOVEMBER 22. MY BIRTHDAY. IT WAS BITTERLY COLD. I STAYED ON A BENCH, IMMOBILE ...
I WATCHED THE PEOPLE GOING TO WORK ...



... THEN COMING BACK ...



NIGHT FELL ...



"NIGHT BRINGS GOOD COUNSEL," MY GRANDMOTHER ALWAYS TOLD ME.

IN EFFECT, SHE
CLEARED UP A LOT OF
POINTS. SUDDENLY, I
HAD A REVELATION.

MARKUS IS A
REAL BASTARD.



ALL THOSE TIMES
WHEN, ON THE
PRETEXT OF NOT
FINDING A PARKING
PLACE, HE MADE
ME GO DOWN INTO
CAFÉ CAMERA ...



... HE KNEW THAT COPS CAME BY FROM
TIME TO TIME ON RAIDS.



IT WOULDN'T HAVE BOTHERED HIM IF I HAD BEEN
ARRESTED.

AND THE TIME WHEN HIS MOTHER MEANLY TOLD ME OFF...



...HE COULD HAVE TAKEN MY
DEFENSE INSTEAD OF SENDING ME
HOME! ...



... NOT TO MENTION THE FIRST TIME WE WENT
OUT TO A NIGHTCLUB TOGETHER, WHEN HE ASKED
ME TO PAY FOR GAS AND ONCE THE GAS WAS PAID
FOR HE TOLD ME:

WHAT I LOVE
ABOUT YOU,
IT'S YOUR
REBELLIOUS
SIDE AND YOUR
NATURAL
NONCHALANCE.



REPPRESSED AS HE WAS, HE MUST HAVE IDENTIFIED
WITH MY REBELLIOUS SIDE.

HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SO BLIND? WHAT
RELATIONSHIP? WHAT LOVE? WHAT SUPPORT?
WHAT AN ASSHOLE!!!





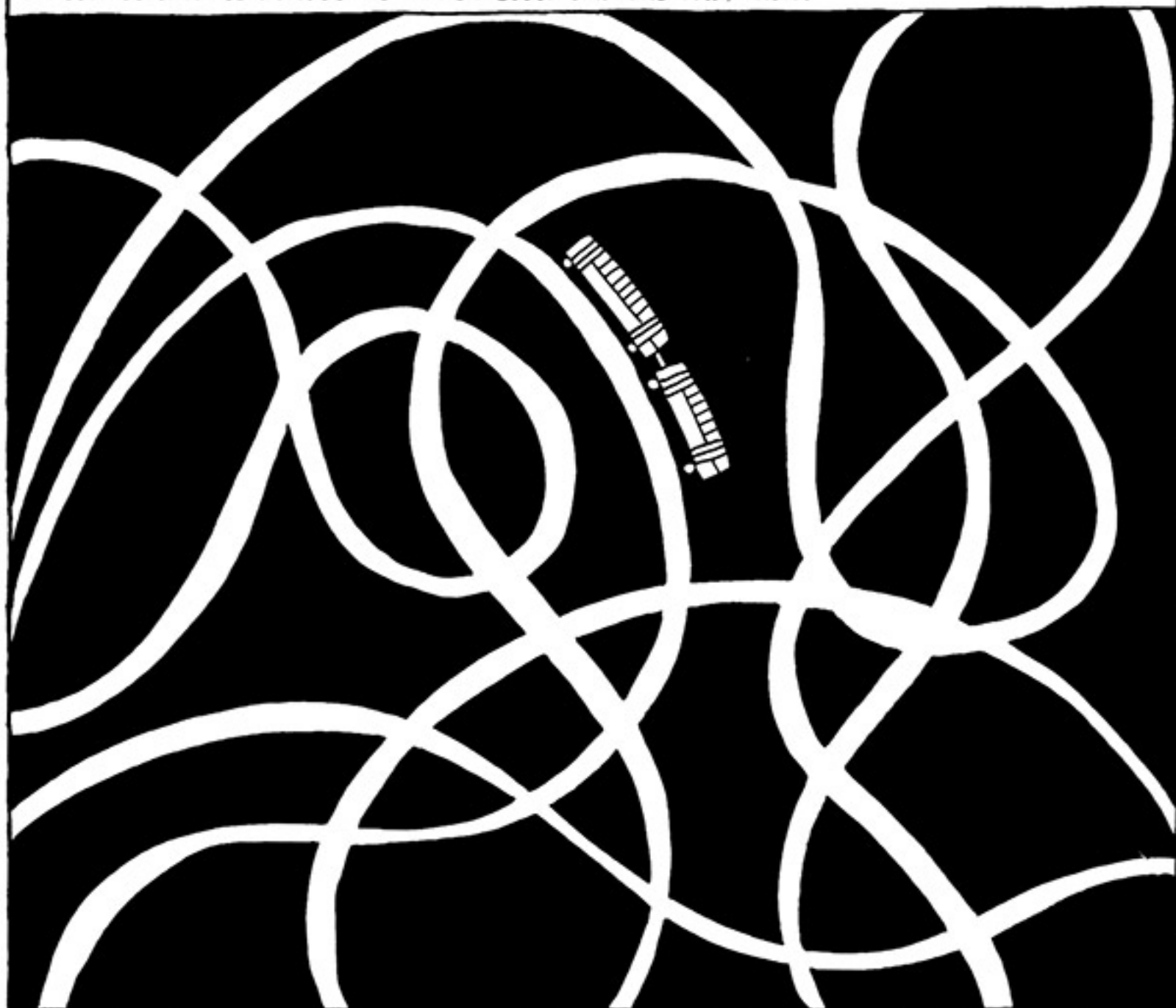
IN THE MORNING, I TOOK THE TRAM.



INSIDE, THERE WERE TWO SPOTS THAT WERE VERY WARM, BECAUSE THEY WERE ABOVE THE MOTOR. I FELL ASLEEP ON ONE OF THESE SEATS. IT WAS PEACEFUL.



FOR ALMOST A MONTH, I LIVED AT THIS RHYTHM: THE NIGHT PROSTRATE AND THE DAY LETTING MYSELF BE CARRIED ACROSS VIENNA BY SLEEP AND THE TRAMWAY.



VERY QUICKLY, MY SAVINGS
VANISHED. I WAS BROKE.



IT'S INCREDIBLE HOW QUICKLY
YOU CAN LOSE YOUR DIGNITY.
I FOUND MYSELF SMOKING
BUTTS,



LOOKING FOR FOOD IN TRASH
CANS,



I, WHO BEFORE COULDN'T EVEN
TASTE FROM OTHERS' PLATES.

SOON, I WAS RECOGNIZED AND
THROWN OUT OF ALL THE TRAMS.



SO I HAD TO FIND A WELL-HIDDEN PLACE TO SLEEP AT NIGHT.
NIGHTS ON THE STREET COULD END VERY BADLY FOR A YOUNG
GIRL LIKE ME.



I DIDN'T HAVE ANYONE. MY ENTIRE EXISTENCE HAD BEEN PLANNED
AROUND MARKUS. IT'S SURELY FOR THIS REASON THAT I FOUND
MYSELF WANDERING LIKE THIS.

IT WAS UNTHINKABLE THAT I
GO BACK TO SEE ZOZO.

I DON'T CARE. OUR
APARTMENT IS TOO SMALL.



NOR INGRID.

YOU DROPPED US FOR A
GUY WHO WASN'T EVEN
WORTH IT.



AS FOR FRAU DOCTOR HELLER,
LET'S NOT EVEN TALK ABOUT
HER. SHE REPRESENTED
ABSOLUTE EVIL IN MY EYES.



I SPENT MORE THAN TWO MONTHS ON THE STREET IN THE MIDDLE OF WINTER.



IT WAS VERY COLD.



I GOT SICK.



I STARTED TO COUGH A LITTLE,



THEN A LITTLE MORE,



THEN A LITTLE MORE STRONGLY,



MY COUGH BECAME CONTINUOUS,



UNTIL I SPIT BLOOD,



AND ENDED UP . .



I WOKE UP IN A HOSPITAL. IT WAS A MIRACLE. IF I HAD FAINTED DURING THE NIGHT, NO ONE WOULD HAVE NOTICED AND THE GLACIAL COLD WOULD SURELY HAVE PREVENTED ME FROM FULFILLING MY DESTINY.

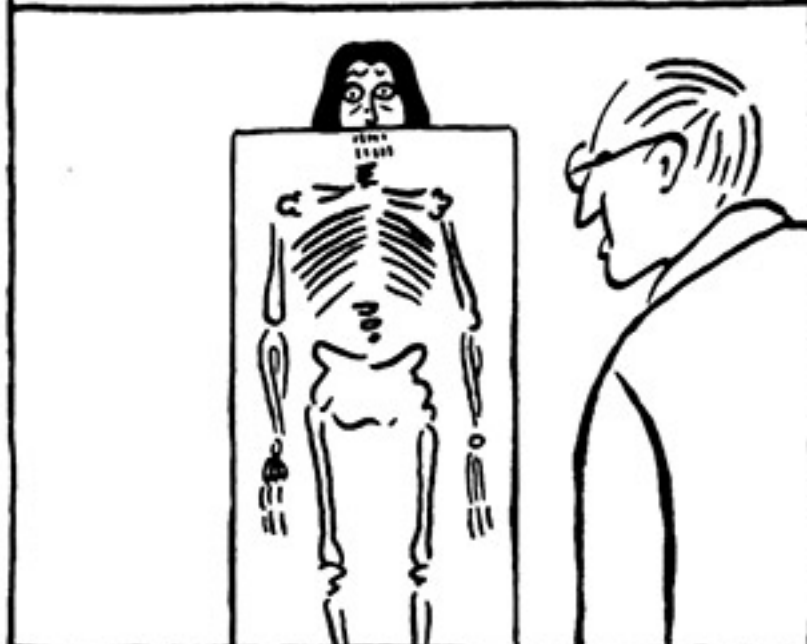


I HAD KNOWN A REVOLUTION THAT HAD MADE ME LOSE PART OF MY FAMILY.

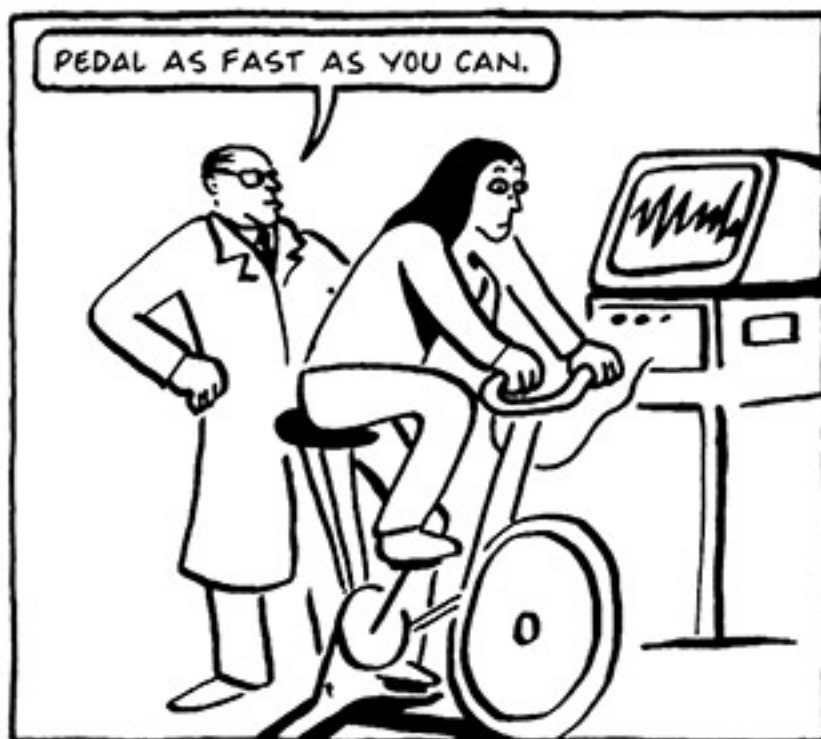
BREATHE, BREATHE



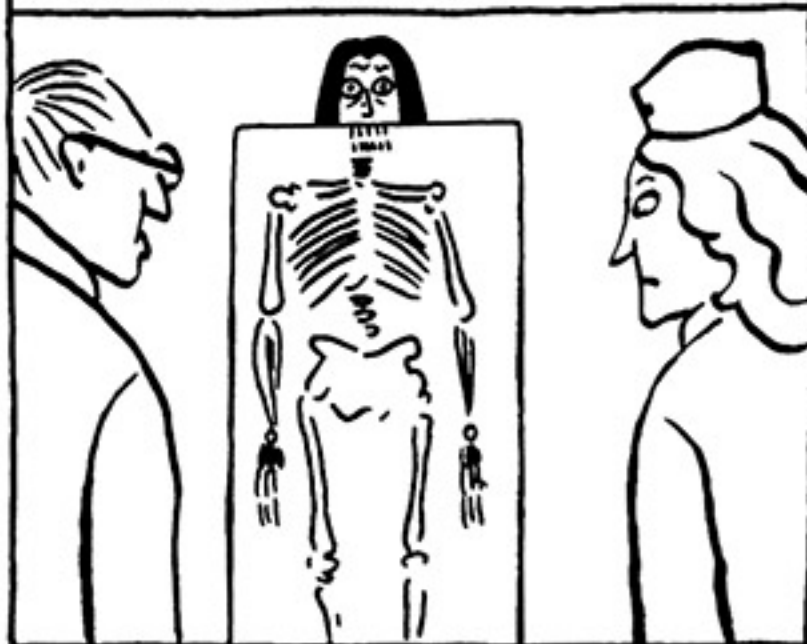
I HAD SURVIVED A WAR THAT HAD DISTANCED ME FROM MY COUNTRY AND MY PARENTS ...



PEDAL AS FAST AS YOU CAN.



... AND IT'S A BANAL STORY OF LOVE THAT ALMOST CARRIED ME AWAY.









THE FIVE DAYS PASSED LIKE THE WIND AND THE CIGARETTES DIDN'T GET THE BETTER OF ME. I GOT DRESSED,



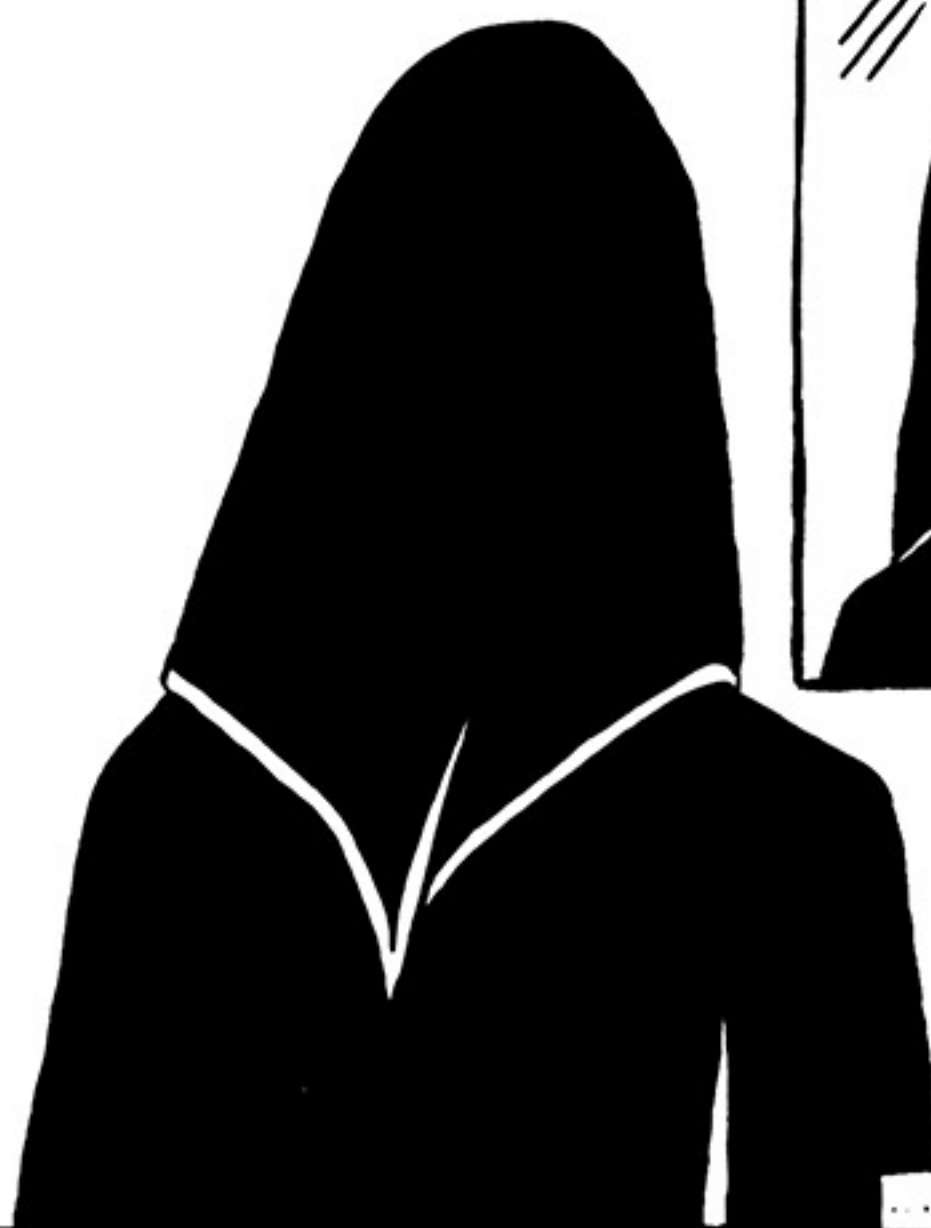
I PACKED MY BAG...



...I AGAIN PUT ON MY VEIL...



... AND SO MUCH FOR MY INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL LIBERTIES ...

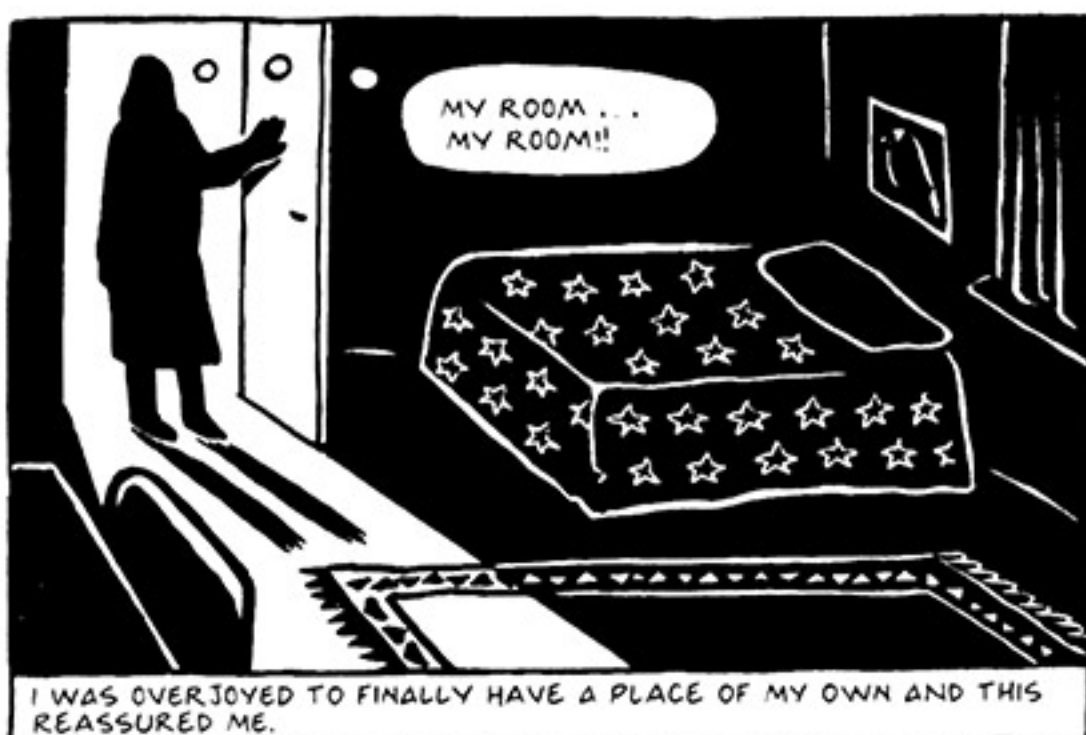


... I NEEDED SO BADLY TO GO HOME.

THE RETURN

AFTER FOUR YEARS LIVING IN VIENNA, HERE I AM BACK IN TEHRAN. FROM THE MOMENT I ARRIVED AT MEHRABAD AIRPORT AND CAUGHT SIGHT OF THE FIRST CUSTOMS AGENT, I IMMEDIATELY FELT THE REPRESSIVE AIR OF MY COUNTRY.







SO I WENT TO SEE MY MOTHER. SHE WOULD SURELY KNOW WHERE THEY WERE. MAYBE SHE EVEN LISTENED TO THEM TO REMEMBER ME.



DO YOU WANT SOME TEA? AN OMELET, SOME TOAST. .?

I'M NOT HUNGRY. TEA IS FINE.



DO YOU REMEMBER FRAU DOCTOR KELLER'S DISGUSTING TEA?

HER NAME WAS HELLER! OF COURSE! HOW COULD I POSSIBLY FORGET THAT HORSE PISS?



AH, THERE'S NOTHING LIKE IRANIAN TEA!

OH YES, ESPECIALLY WITH A CIGARETTE. DO YOU WANT ONE?



MOM!!

WHAT? YOU KNOW THE PROVERB: "PROSPERITY CONSISTS OF TWO THINGS: TEA AFTER A MEAL, AND A CIGARETTE AFTER TEA."

IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT MY MOTHER HAD SPOKEN TO ME IN THIS TONE: IN HER EYES NOW, I HAD BECOME AN ADULT.



MOM, I CAN'T FIND MY TAPES. I LOOKED EVERYWHERE FOR THEM! DO YOU KNOW WHERE THEY ARE?

WELL, HMM, YOU SEE ... SINCE I DIDN'T THINK THAT ... THAT YOU WOULD COME BACK ONE DAY, I GAVE ... I GAVE THEM TO HOMA.

HOMA WAS THE DAUGHTER OF ONE OF HER FRIENDS. SHE WAS FIVE YEARS YOUNGER THAN ME. A CHILD!



AFTER ALL, MOM HADN'T BEEN WRONG. IN ANY CASE, I NO LONGER LIKED THE IDOLS OF MY ADOLESCENCE.



YOU'RE RIGHT! I'M GOING TO BUY MYSELF SOME NEW ONES!

CAN YOU GIVE ME A SPONGE?

A SPONGE? OF COURSE, DARLING.



I DECIDED TO TAKE THIS LITTLE PROBLEM AS A SIGN. IT WAS TIME TO FINISH WITH THE PAST ...



... AND TO LOOK TOWARD THE FUTURE.



IT WASN'T JUST THE VEIL TO WHICH I HAD TO READJUST, THERE WERE ALSO ALL THE IMAGES: THE SIXTY-FIVE-FOOT-HIGH MURALS PRESENTING MARTYRS, ADORNED WITH SLOGANS HONORING THEM, SLOGANS LIKE "THE MARTYR IS THE HEART OF HISTORY" OR "I HOPE TO BE A MARTYR MYSELF" OR "A MARTYR LIVES FOREVER."



ESPECIALLY AFTER FOUR YEARS SPENT IN AUSTRIA, WHERE YOU WERE MORE LIKELY TO SEE ON THE WALLS "BEST SAUSAGES FOR 20 SHILLINGS," THE ROAD TO READJUSTMENT SEEMED VERY LONG TO ME.

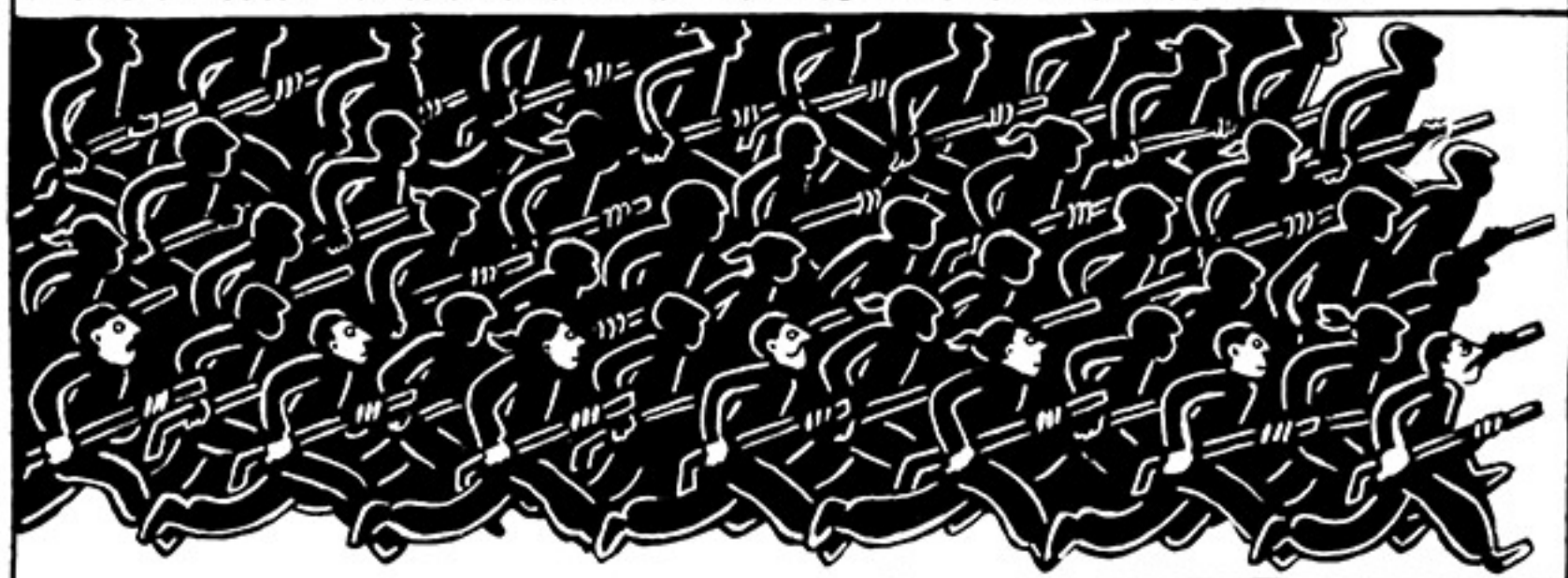








...THE PEACE HADN'T YET BEEN ANNOUNCED WHEN THE ARMED GROUPS OPPOSED TO THE ISLAMIC REGIME, THE IRANIAN MUJAHIDEEN,* ENTERED THE COUNTRY FROM THE IRAQI BORDER WITH THE SUPPORT OF SADDAM HUSSEIN TO LIBERATE IRAN FROM THE HANDS OF ITS FUNDAMENTALIST LEADERS.



*THE TERM "MUJAHIDEEN" ISN'T SPECIFIC TO AFGHANISTAN. IT MEANS A COMBATANT.





OR, THEY WOULD BE EXECUTED.



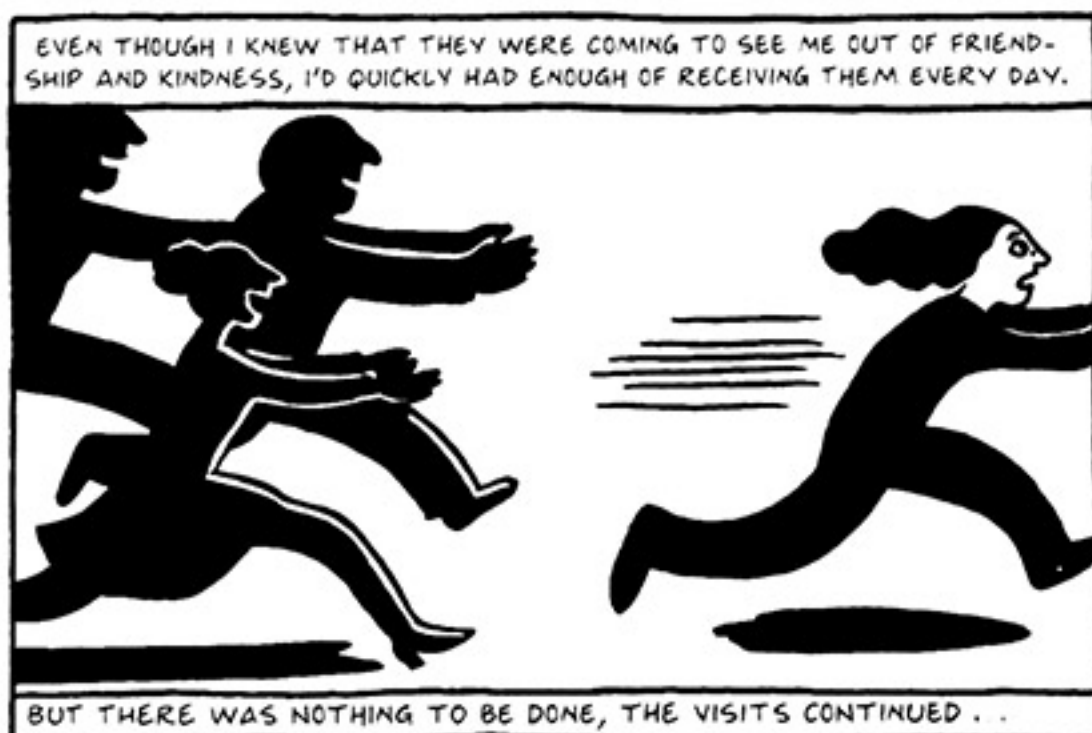
AND, WELL, MOST OF THEM WERE EXECUTED.





THE JOKE

I HAD BEEN IN TEHRAN FOR TEN DAYS. DESPITE MY RELUCTANCE, IN THE END MY ENTIRE FAMILY CAME TO SEE ME. I DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER OR NOT THEY KNEW ABOUT MY EUROPEAN FAILURE. I WAS SCARED THAT THEY WOULD BE DISAPPOINTED.



AFTER MY FAMILY, IT WAS MY FRIENDS' TURN. I HAD FEWER APPREHENSIONS ABOUT THEM: WE WERE THE SAME AGE, WHICH SHOULD MAKE IT EASIER TO CONNECT.



I WAS WRONG. THEY ALL LOOKED LIKE THE HEROINES OF AMERICAN TV SERIES, READY TO GET MARRIED AT THE DROP OF A HAT, IF THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED ITSELF.



COMPARED TO HER FASHIONABLE MAKEUP, I REALLY DID EXUDE ALL THE ALLURE OF A NUN.



I HAD A HARD TIME REMEMBERING WHAT HAD BROUGHT US TOGETHER BEFORE.

A PART OF ME UNDERSTOOD THEM. WHEN SOMETHING IS FORBIDDEN, IT TAKES ON A DISPROPORTIONATE IMPORTANCE. MUCH LATER, I LEARNED THAT MAKING THEMSELVES UP AND WANTING TO FOLLOW WESTERN WAYS WAS AN ACT OF RESISTANCE ON THEIR PART.



NEVERTHELESS, I FELT TERRIBLY ALONE.

SOME DAYS LATER.

LALEH CALLED FOR YOU.

PFFF...

OH!...MY FRIENDS. . MY FRIENDS, I FIND THEM ALL SO UNBEARABLY INANE!

YOU KNOW, IT'S NOT ENTIRELY THEIR FAULT. NO ONE IS ASKING THEM TO BE INTELLIGENT! COMPLETELY THE OPPOSITE, IN FACT!

GIVE IT SOME THOUGHT, MY CHILD. THERE MUST BE SOME PEOPLE THAT YOU'D LIKE TO SPEND TIME WITH!

GRANDMA WAS RIGHT. I WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY HAPPY TO SEE THE KIDS I USED TO PLAY WITH IN THE STREET.

I'D LIKE TO SEE ARASH AND KIA AGAIN...

...YES! ARASH AND KIA! KIA ESPECIALLY. WE HAD SO MUCH FUN TOGETHER. AND, HE'S A GUY. HE MUST HAVE SOMETHING OTHER THAN MAKEUP ON HIS MIND.

UHM...

MY MOTHER'S RESPONSE SEEMED NORMAL. SHE NEVER REALLY LIKED HIM. SHE THOUGHT THAT HE WAS BADLY BROUGHT UP AND ENCOURAGED ME TO DO STUPID THINGS.

MOM, DON'T WORRY. WE'RE ALL GROWN UP NOW. IF I SEE HIM, WE'RE NOT GOING TO BREAK WINDOWS, OR ATTACK PEOPLE WITH NAILS.

IT'S JUST THAT KIA...

KIA WHAT?

WELL, HE WAS CALLED UP FOR SERVICE BUT HE PREFERRED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY ILLEGALLY.

AND WHERE DID HE GO?

NOWHERE... THEY ARRESTED HIM. THEN, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, HE WAS REQUIRED TO DO HIS MILITARY SERVICE... THEY SENT HIM TO THE FRONT AND...

AND THEN WHAT? IS HE DEAD?

ALMOST.

ALMOST DEAD???

YES, WELL, HOW DO YOU SAY... HE IS DISABLED.







HE ENDED UP LANDING IN A GOOD HOSPITAL. THERE, THE DOCTORS SET THEMSELVES TO STICKING THE PIECES BACK TOGETHER. THEY STITCHED AND STITCHED.



...AND FINALLY, AFTER ONE HUNDRED FIFTY OPERATIONS AND A YEAR AND A HALF OF BANDAGES...



HE BECAME, ONCE AGAIN, A WHOLE MAN.

OH, DOCTOR. I'VE NEVER FELT SO GOOD. THANKS TO YOU, I CAN BEGIN A NEW LIFE.



TO HELP HIM LEAD HIS NEW LIFE, HIS FAMILY DECIDED TO FIND HIM A WIFE. HIS MOTHER DID THE ROUNDS OF THEIR FRIENDS AND THEIR NEIGHBORS AND FOUND A RARE PEARL. AND AS TRADITION REQUIRES, THE MAN, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS FAMILY, WENT TO ASK FOR THE YOUNG GIRL'S HAND.



AFTER LONG NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE AMOUNT OF THE DOWRY,* THE WEDDING RINGS, THE DRESS, THE FLOWERS, THE HAIRDRESSER, THE MAKEUP ARTIST, THE WEDDING VIDEO CREW, THE CATERERS, THE WAITERS, THE MUSICIANS, THE NUMBER OF GUESTS, THE TWO FAMILIES REACHED AN AGREEMENT.

IT'S THE MOST BEAUTIFUL DAY OF MY LIFE.

I'LL LOVE YOU FOREVER.



*IN IRAN, IT'S THE HUSBAND WHO MUST PAY HIS WIFE A DOWRY.







SKIING



I THOUGHT THAT BY COMING BACK TO IRAN, EVERYTHING WOULD BE FINE.



THAT I WOULD FORGET THE OLD DAYS.



BUT MY PAST CAUGHT UP WITH ME.



MY SECRETS WEIGHED ME DOWN.



I BECAME DEPRESSED.

MARJI, I'M GOING GROCERY SHOPPING. DO YOU NEED ANYTHING?

CIGARETTES, PLEASE.



I RENTED "LA DOLCE VITA." DON'T YOU WANT TO WATCH IT TOGETHER?

NO ...



EVEN MY GRANDMA COULD NO LONGER GET ME TO LAUGH.

...HE FARTED! IT SMELLED LIKE A DEAD RAT ...



I WAS ALWAYS IN FRONT OF THE TV. THERE WAS A JAPANESE SERIES, CALLED "OSHIN," THAT I WATCHED OFTEN. IT WAS THE STORY OF A POOR GIRL WHO CAME TO WORK IN TOKYO.



AT FIRST, SHE CLEANED HOUSES, THEN SHE BECAME A HAIRDRESSER AND MET A GUY WHOSE MOTHER WAS OPPOSED TO THEIR MARRIAGE.

YOU ARE NOTHING BUT A HAIRDRESSER, YOU AREN'T WORTHY OF MY SON! GET OUT, YOU ROTTEN GIRL!

NO! I LOVE HIM!



I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THE MOTHER-IN-LAW HATED HAIRDRESSERS SO MUCH.

MUCH LATER, I GOT TO KNOW A GIRL WHO DUBBED TELEVISION SHOWS. SHE TOLD ME THAT OSHIN WAS IN FACT A GEISHA AND SINCE HER PROFESSION DIDN'T SUIT ISLAMIC MORALS, THE DIRECTOR OF THE CHANNEL HAD DECIDED THAT SHE'D BE A HAIRDRESSER.



IT WAS BELIEVABLE BECAUSE OSHIN AND HER COURTESAN FRIENDS SPENT THEIR TIME MAKING CHIGNONS.

TO LIFT ME OUT OF MY DEPRESSION, MY FRIENDS SUGGESTED TAKING ME SKIING. ONE OF THEIR PARENTS HAD A CHALET AT DIZIN.* I DIDN'T WANT TO GO, BUT MY MOTHER INSISTED SO MUCH THAT I ENDED UP ACCEPTING.



* A SKI RESORT ABOUT THIRTY MILES FROM TEHRAN.

YOU KNOW, YOU CAN RENT EQUIPMENT. IF YOU WANT, WE CAN TEACH YOU HOW TO SKI.



ACTUALLY, I FELT ON TOP OF THE WORLD. THE MOUNTAIN, THE BLUE SKY, THE SUN, ... ALL OF IT SUITED ME. LITTLE BY LITTLE MY HEAD AND MY SPIRIT TOOK ON SOME COLOR.





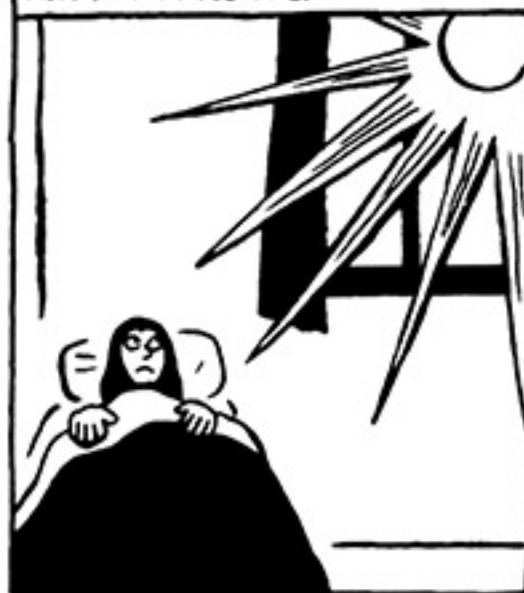




SO I WAITED UNTIL MY WRIST
HEALED TO SWALLOW ALL MY
ANTI-DEPRESSANTS.



I TOLD MYSELF THAT IT WAS THE
LAST TIME I WOULD SEE THE
SUN. I ALSO SPARED A THOUGHT
FOR MY PARENTS.



IT WAS THE END ...



...THREE DAYS LATER ...



IT'S MY HAND! SHIT!
I'M STILL ALIVE!



WHEN I WOKE UP, THE DRUGS THAT I HAD TAKEN
GAVE ME SEVERAL HOURS' WORTH OF HALLUCINATIONS.



SO I WENT TO SEE MY THERAPIST.

YOU SWALLOWED THEM ALL? ARE YOU SURE?

YES ...

THAT DOSE SHOULD HAVE
BEEN ENOUGH TO FINISH
OFF AN ELEPHANT! ...
EVEN THOUGH I'M NOT A
BELIEVER, ASIDE FROM
DIVINE INTERVENTION, I
CAN'T FIND ANY OTHER
EXPLANATION FOR YOUR
SURVIVAL.

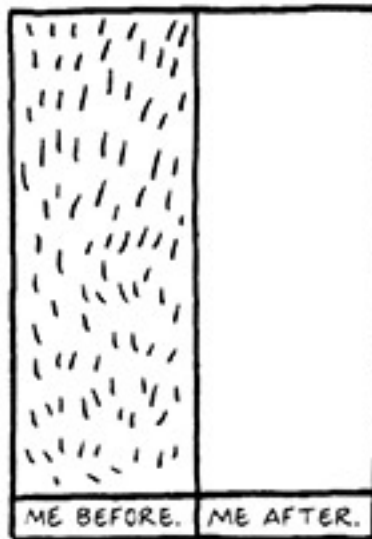


I INFERRED FROM THIS THAT I
WAS NOT MADE TO DIE.

FROM NOW ON, I'M
TAKING MYSELF IN HAND.



BODY HAIR BEING AN OBSESSION OF THE ORIENTAL WOMAN, I BEGAN WITH HAIR REMOVAL.



THEN I GOT RID OF MY OLD CLOTHES.



AND HAD SOME NEW CLOTHES MADE.



A MODERN WARDROBE.



ORIGINAL SHOES.



A FASHIONABLE HAIRCUT.



A PERMANENT.



I BECAME A SOPHISTICATED WOMAN ...



SHOPPING.



MAKEUP.



AND AS A HEALTHY MIND IS
FOUND IN A HEALTHY BODY, I
TOOK UP EXERCISE.



MORE AND MORE,



AND MORE AND MORE,



TO THE POINT WHERE I BECAME AN AEROBICS INSTRUCTOR.



AND FIVE AND SIX...
AND ONE AND TWO...

♪ ♪ ♪
EYE OF
THE TIGER
♪ ♪ ♪

STRONG AND INVINCIBLE LIKE THIS, I WAS GOING TO MEET MY NEW DESTINY.

در اینجا می‌توانید به راحتی به اطلاعات بیشتری در مورد این کتاب و نویسنده آن دسترسی پیدا کنید. برای این منظور به وبسایت www.mashin.com مراجعه کنید.

THE EXAM

MY PARENTS OBVIOUSLY NEVER KNEW THE REASONS FOR MY METAMORPHOSIS. MY NEW APPROACH TO LIFE DELIGHTED THEM TO THE POINT OF THEIR BUYING ME A CAR, BY WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT.



I HAD NEW FRIENDS, I WENT TO PARTIES ... IN SHORT, MY LIFE HAD TAKEN A COMPLETELY NEW TURN. ONE EVENING IN APRIL 1989, I WAS INVITED TO MY FRIEND ROXANA'S HOUSE.

WELCOME, PLEASE MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME.



ASIDE FROM THE LADY OF THE HOUSE, I DIDN'T KNOW ANYONE.

I'M REZA. HOW ARE YOU?

AND YOURSELF?



CAN I SIT DOWN?

PLEASE DO.



WHAT DO YOU DO?

I'M AN AEROBICS INSTRUCTOR, I ALSO TEACH FRENCH.

HAVE YOU LIVED IN FRANCE?



NO, IN AUSTRIA, BUT I STUDIED AT THE LYCÉE FRANÇAIS IN TEHRAN AND IN VIENNA.

WERE YOU AT THE LYCÉE RAZI?*

YES, WERE YOU TOO?

NO, NOT ME, MY FRIENDS.



AND YOU? WHAT DO YOU DO?



PAINTING.

NO WAY! I PAINT TOO!!



*THE NAME OF THE LYCÉE FRANÇAIS IN TEHRAN.





*A MOUNTAIN CHAIN IN THE WEST OF IRAN



EVERYTHING ABOUT US WAS OPPOSITE

HIS ROOM



MY ROOM



HIS CHILDHOOD FRIENDS



MY CHILDHOOD FRIENDS



HIS FAVORITE ACTIVITY



MY FAVORITE ACTIVITY



HIS IDEAL LIFE



MY IDEAL LIFE



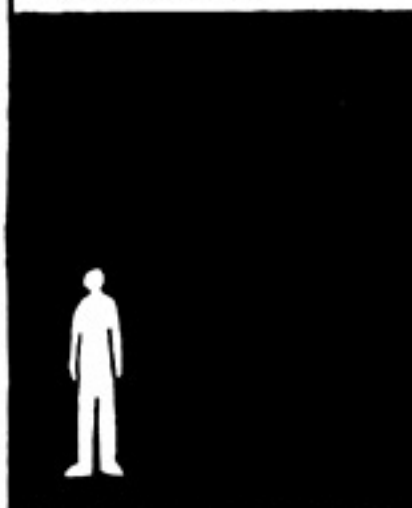
HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS MOTHER



MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY MOTHER



HIS SOCIAL LIFE



MY SOCIAL LIFE



THE IMAGE I HAD OF HIM



THE IMAGE HE HAD OF ME



HE SOUGHT IN ME A LOST LIGHTEARTEDNESS.



AND I SOUGHT IN HIM A WAR WHICH I HAD ESCAPED.



IN SHORT, WE COMPLEMENTED EACH OTHER.

WE NEEDED EACH OTHER SO MUCH THAT WE VERY QUICKLY STARTED TO TALK ABOUT OUR SHARED FUTURE.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE?

I WANT TO LEAVE HERE. EITHER I'LL GO TO EUROPE, OR TO THE UNITED STATES, BUT I WON'T STAY HERE.



WHERE WILL YOU GO IN EUROPE?

ITALY, FRANCE, SWEDEN, SPAIN, ENGLAND... IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER. I JUST DON'T WANT TO LIVE IN IRAN ANYMORE.



AND US?

YOU'LL COME WITH ME!



I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY RIGHT AWAY.

IT'S BECAUSE YOU ARE STILL NOSTALGIC. YOU'LL SEE, A YEAR FROM NOW PEOPLE WILL DISGUST YOU. ALWAYS INTERFERING IN THINGS THAT DON'T CONCERN THEM.



MAYBE SO, BUT IN THE WEST YOU CAN COLLAPSE IN THE STREET AND NO ONE WILL GIVE YOU A HAND.

DON'T WORRY! WE'LL FIND A SOLUTION!



HAPPILY, GETTING A VISA PROVED TO BE EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT. SO WE DECIDED TO STUDY FOR THE NATIONAL EXAM* SO AS NOT TO WASTE YEARS OF OUR LIVES DOING NOTHING. IT WAS VERY HARD! IT HAD BEEN SIX YEARS SINCE REZA HAD GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL. HE WAS OUT OF PRACTICE FOR STUDYING. AS FOR ME, I HADN'T READ OR WRITTEN IN PERSIAN SINCE I WAS FOURTEEN.



* IN IRAN, YOU CAN'T ENTER UNIVERSITY WITHOUT HAVING PASSED THE NATIONAL EXAM.

JUNE 1989. AFTER TWO MONTHS OF HARD WORK, THE BIG DAY FINALLY ARRIVED.



THE CANDIDATES TOOK THE EXAMS IN DIFFERENT PLACES, ACCORDING TO THEIR SEX.



THERE WERE QUESTIONNAIRES SPECIFIC TO EACH SECTION.

TO GET INTO THE COLLEGE OF ART, IN ADDITION TO THE OTHER TESTS, THERE WAS A DRAWING QUALIFICATION. I WAS SURE THAT ONE OF ITS SUBJECTS WOULD BE "THE MARTYRS," AND FOR GOOD REASON! SO I PRACTICED BY COPYING A PHOTO OF MICHELANGELO'S "LA PIETÀ" ABOUT TWENTY TIMES. ON THAT DAY, I REPRODUCED IT BY PUTTING A BLACK CHADOR ON MARY'S HEAD, AN ARMY UNIFORM ON JESUS, AND THEN I ADDED TWO TULIPS, SYMBOLS OF THE MARTYRS,* ON EITHER SIDE SO THERE WOULD BE NO CONFUSION.



I WAS VERY PLEASED WITH MY DRAWING.

*IT'S SAID THAT RED TULIPS GROW FROM THE BLOOD OF MARTYRS.

... WE HAD TO WAIT SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE GETTING THE RESULTS IN THE "ETELAAT,"* WHICH DIDN'T COME OUT UNTIL 3 P.M. WE WERE IN FRONT OF THE KIOSKS AT 1.



* NAME OF A NEWSPAPER.



KNOWING THAT 40% OF THE PLACES WERE RESERVED FOR CHILDREN OF MARTYRS AND THOSE DISABLED BY THE WAR, THE SEATS WERE LIMITED. IT WAS AN UNEXPECTED STROKE OF LUCK THAT WE BOTH PASSED THE NATIONAL EXAM.

SINCE WE WEREN'T MARRIED, WE COULDN'T KISS EACH OTHER IN PUBLIC, OR EVEN GIVE ONE ANOTHER A FRIENDLY HUG TO EXPRESS OUR EXTREME JOY. WE RISKED IMPRISONMENT AND BEING WHIPPED. SO WE GOT INTO THE CAR QUICKLY ...



... WHERE HE PUT HIS HAND ON MINE.



IT WAS EXTRAORDINARY.





THE MAKEUP

OUR SUCCESS ON THE EXAM MADE REZA AND ME MORE CALM ABOUT OUR SHARED FUTURE. NOW WE WERE ABLE TO STAY TOGETHER, BECAUSE NEITHER OF US WAS GOING TO LEAVE IRAN WITHOUT THE OTHER. FROM THEN ON, WE BECAME A REAL COUPLE, WHICH NATURALLY MEANT THAT WE BEGAN TO PICK ON EACH OTHER. I REPROACHED HIM FOR NOT BEING ACTIVE ENOUGH. HE CHOSE TO CRITICIZE MY PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: NOT ELEGANT ENOUGH, NOT MADE-UP ENOUGH, ETC., ETC., ...



AT THE TIME, I THOUGHT I SHOULD MAKE SOME EFFORTS... ONE DAY, WHEN WE HAD A RENDEZVOUS IN FRONT OF THE SAVAFIEH BAZAAR,* I ARRIVED VERY MADE-UP TO GIVE HIM A SURPRISE.



* NAME OF A SHOPPING CENTER

SUDDENLY, FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET, I SAW A CAR FULL OF GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION ARRIVE, FOLLOWED BY A BUS. WHEN THEY CAME WITH THE BUS, IT MEANT A RAID.



THIS CALLED FOR ACTION.



THAT'S IT!! I'VE GOT IT!



I HAD TO DISTRACT THEM. I HAD TO GO SEE THEM BEFORE THEY SAW ME.



YES MY SISTER!



WHERE'S THE BASTARD, I'LL SHUT HIM UP ONCE AND FOR ALL!









*THE COMMISSARIAT OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION.
**AT THE TIME, THE MONTHLY SALARY OF A GOVERNMENT WORKER.





THE OUTSIDE BEING DANGEROUS, WE OFTEN FOUND OURSELVES INSIDE, AT HIS HOUSE OR AT MY HOUSE. THIS SITUATION WAS SUFFOCATING ME.



WE COULDN'T DO ANYTHING ELSE BUT CLOSE IN ON EACH OTHER.





THE CONVOCATION

SEPTEMBER 1989. I WAS FINALLY A STUDENT.



THE BREAKFAST THAT MY MOTHER HAD PREPARED JUST LIKE SHE USED TO, THE MELANCHOLY ATMOSPHERE OF THE BEGINNING OF AUTUMN, MY UNIFORM... EVERYTHING REMINDED ME OF THE BEGINNING OF SCHOOL.



REZA FOUND ME ON THE WAY.



DO YOU THINK THAT WE CAN TELL PEOPLE WE'RE TOGETHER?

ARE YOU CRAZY? NOT ON YOUR LIFE. IF THE ADMINISTRATION DISCOVERS OUR RELATIONSHIP, WE'LL BE KICKED OUT! TO THEM, WE'RE BREAKING THE LAW!



HE WAS EXAGGERATING A LITTLE. FROM THE MOMENT WE ARRIVED AT UNIVERSITY, ALTHOUGH BOYS AND GIRLS DIDN'T MIX, THIS DIDN'T STOP THEM FROM THROWING EACH OTHER FLIRTATIOUS LOOKS.



NATURALLY! AFTER ALL, LAW OR NO LAW, THESE WERE HUMAN BEINGS.

MANY OF THE STUDENTS KNEW ONE ANOTHER ALREADY. IN LISTENING TO THEM, I UNDERSTOOD THAT THEY'D TAKEN THE PREPARATORY CLASSES TOGETHER. OUR FIRST LESSON WAS "ART HISTORY."

WHAT IS GENERALLY KNOWN AS ARAB ART AND ARCHITECTURE SHOULD IN FACT BE CALLED THE ART OF THE ISLAMIC EMPIRE, WHICH STRETCHED FROM CHINA TO SPAIN. THIS ART IS A CROSS BETWEEN INDIAN, PERSIAN, AND MESOPOTAMIAN ART. THOSE WHOM WE CONSIDER, LIKE AVICENNA, TO BE "ARAB SCHOLARS" ARE FOR THE MOST PART ANYTHING BUT ARABS. EVEN THE FIRST BOOK OF ARABIC GRAMMAR WAS WRITTEN BY AN IRANIAN.



IT WAS FUNNY TO SEE TO WHAT EXTENT THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC WAS NOT ABLE TO PUT AN END TO OUR CHAUVINISM. TO THE CONTRARY! PEOPLE OFTEN COMPARED THE OBSCURANTISM OF THE NEW REGIME TO THE ARAB INVASION. ACCORDING TO THIS LOGIC, "BEING PERSIAN" MEANT "NOT BEING A FANATIC." BUT THIS PARALLEL WENT ONLY SO FAR CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT OUR GOVERNMENT WASN'T COMPOSED OF ARAB INVADERS BUT PERSIAN FUNDAMENTALISTS.

AT LUNCH TIME.

THE PROFESSOR IS VERY INTERESTING, BUT OH MY! DOES HIS MOUTH SMELL. EVEN THIRTY FEET AWAY YOU CAN SMELL HIS JACKAL'S BREATH!

AMONG THE GUYS, A FEW EVEN HAVE HAIR CUTS!!! MY GOD!

HA! HA! HA!



DESPITE THEIR UPTIGHT APPEARANCE, THE GIRLS IN MY CLASS SEEMED TO BE QUITE THE COMEDIANS.

HEY! LOOK, THE GUY IN THE BLUE SHIRT... HE'S REALLY NOT BAD!



THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT REZA. I SUDDENLY FOUND THEM A LOT LESS FUNNY.

HI, I'M SHOUKA.

AND I'M NIYOOSHA.

NICE TO MEET YOU. I'M MARJANE.



NIYOOSHA HAD VERY GREEN EYES WHICH MADE HER THE MOST SOUGHT AFTER GIRL AT THE COLLEGE. (THE MAJORITY OF IRANIANS HAVE BLACK EYES.)

YOU'VE LIVED ABROAD?

YES, HOW DID YOU KNOW?

BECAUSE OF YOUR MAGHNAEH! YOU WEAR IT LIKE A BEGINNER.



SHOUKA WAS VERY FUNNY. UNFORTUNATELY, WHEN SHE GOT MARRIED TWO YEARS LATER, HER HUSBAND FORBADE HER FROM ASSOCIATING WITH ME. TO HIM, I WAS AN AMORAL PERSON.

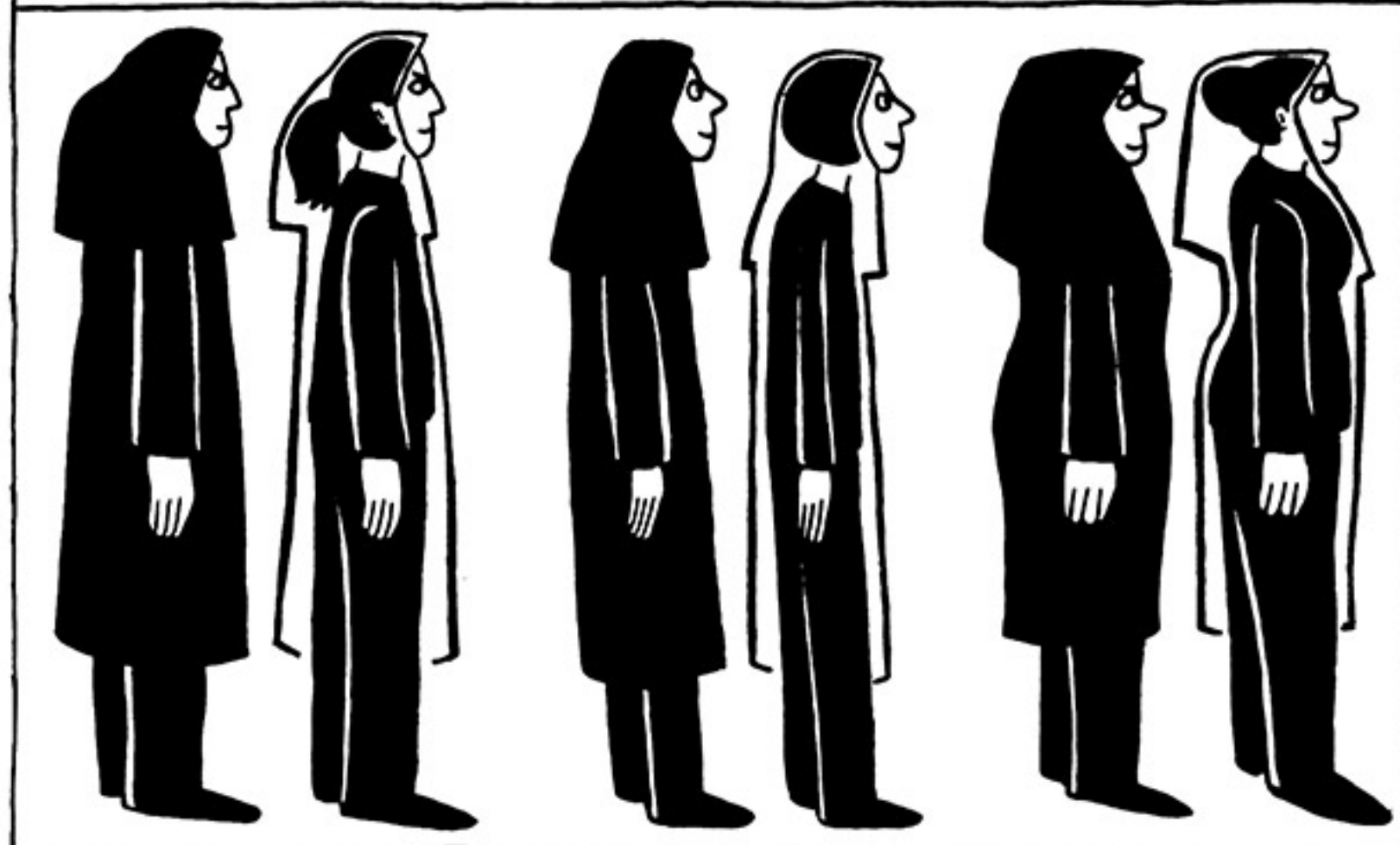
*HOODED HEAD-SCARF

IT'S TRUE THAT WEARING THE VEIL WAS A REAL SCIENCE. YOU HAD TO MAKE A SPECIAL FOLD, LIKE THIS:



NEVERTHELESS, THINGS WERE EVOLVING... YEAR BY YEAR, WOMEN WERE WINNING AN EIGHTH OF AN INCH OF HAIR AND LOSING AN EIGHTH OF AN INCH OF VEIL.

WITH PRACTICE, EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE COVERED FROM HEAD TO FOOT, YOU GOT TO THE POINT WHERE YOU COULD GUESS THEIR SHAPE, THE WAY THEY WORE THEIR HAIR AND EVEN THEIR POLITICAL OPINIONS. OBVIOUSLY, THE MORE A WOMAN SHOWED, THE MORE PROGRESSIVE AND MODERN SHE WAS.





ONCE IN THE AMPHITHEATER, WE DISCOVERED THE REASON FOR OUR CONVOCATION: THE ADMINISTRATION HAD ORGANIZED A LECTURE WITH THE THEME OF "MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CONDUCT," TO SHOW US THE RIGHT PATH.

WE CAN'T ALLOW OURSELVES TO BEHAVE LOOSELY! IT'S THE BLOOD OF OUR MARTYRS WHICH HAS NOURISHED THE FLOWERS OF OUR REPUBLIC. TO ALLOW ONESELF TO BEHAVE INDECENTLY IS TO TRAMPLE ON THE BLOOD OF THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR OUR FREEDOM. ALSO, I AM ASKING THE YOUNG LADIES PRESENT HERE TO WEAR LESS-WIDE TROUSERS AND LONGER HEAD-SCARVES. YOU SHOULD COVER YOUR HAIR WELL, YOU SHOULD NOT WEAR MAKEUP, YOU SHOULD. .







THE SOCKS

TO KEEP US FROM STRAYING OFF THE STRAIGHT PATH, OUR STUDIOS WERE SEPARATED FROM THOSE OF THE BOYS.



AFTER A FEW WEEKS, WE DISCOVERED, ALONG WITH OUR PROFESSOR, THAT IT WAS PREFERABLE TO HAVE A MODEL ON WHOM YOU COULD AT LEAST DISTINGUISH THE LIMBS. OUR DIRECTOR APPROVED.



ONE EVENING, BEFORE THE COLLEGE CLOSED, ONE OF THE SUPERVISORS PAID ME A VISIT.



WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT THIS MAN?



YES, BUT YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO LOOK AT HIM. IT'S AGAINST THE MORAL CODE.



WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO? SHOULD I DRAW THIS MAN WHILE LOOKING AT THE DOOR????!!



THESE ABSURD SITUATIONS WERE QUITE FREQUENT. ONE DAY, FOR EXAMPLE, I WAS SUPPOSED TO GO SEE MY DENTIST, BUT CLASSES FINISHED LATER THAN EXPECTED.



SUDDENLY, I HEARD A VOICE OVER THE LOUDSPEAKER:



THE LADY IN THE BLUE COAT!!! STOP RUNNING!



HEY-BLUE COAT! STOP RUNNING!



ME?



MADAM, WHY WERE YOU RUNNING?

I'M VERY LATE! I WAS RUNNING TO CATCH MY BUS.



YES... BUT... WHEN YOU RUN, YOUR BEHIND MAKES MOVEMENTS THAT ARE... HOW DO YOU SAY... OBSCENE!



WELL THEN DON'T LOOK AT MY ASS!



I YELLED SO LOUDLY THAT THEY DIDN'T EVEN ARREST ME.





I DIDN'T SAY EVERYTHING I COULD HAVE: THAT SHE WAS FRUSTRATED BECAUSE SHE WAS STILL A VIRGIN AT TWENTY-SEVEN! THAT SHE WAS FORBIDDING ME WHAT WAS FORBIDDEN TO HER! THAT TO MARRY SOMEONE THAT YOU DON'T KNOW, FOR HIS MONEY, IS PROSTITUTION. THAT DESPITE HER LOCKS OF HAIR AND HER LIPSTICK, SHE WAS ACTING LIKE THE STATE. THAT... ETC... THAT DAY, HALF THE CLASS TURNED ITS BACK ON ME.

HAPPILY, THERE WAS STILL THE OTHER HALF. LITTLE BY LITTLE, I GOT TO KNOW THE STUDENTS WHO THOUGHT LIKE ME.



WE WOULD GO TO ONE ANOTHER'S HOUSES, WHERE WE POSED FOR EACH OTHER ... WE HAD AT LAST FOUND A PLACE OF FREEDOM.



AT FIRST THERE WERE ONLY FIVE OF US.



THEN ...



AND FINALLY ...



WE WERE MUCH MORE NUMEROUS THAN I WOULD HAVE BELIEVED.

OUR PROFESSOR WAS SO HAPPY TO SEE THE SKETCHES WE DID AT HOME.

BRAVO! AN ARTIST SHOULD DEFY THE LAW! I CONGRATULATE YOU!



THE MORE TIME PASSED, THE MORE I BECAME CONSCIOUS OF THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION OF MY COUNTRY AND THE REAL LIFE OF THE PEOPLE, THE ONE THAT WENT ON BEHIND THE WALLS.



OUR BEHAVIOR IN PUBLIC AND OUR BEHAVIOR IN PRIVATE WERE POLAR OPPOSITES.



... THIS DISPARITY MADE US SCHIZOPHRENIC.

TO FIND A SEMBLANCE OF EQUILIBRIUM, WE PARTIED ALMOST EVERY NIGHT ...



... BUT EVEN IN OUR HOMES, THEY DIDN'T LEAVE US ALONE.

I SAW A PATROL OF GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION OUT THE WINDOW! I THINK THEY'RE COMING TO ARREST US!



COME ALONG YOU LITTLE BASTARD! YOU'RE ORGANIZING PARTIES! I'LL CURE YOU OF YOUR TASTE FOR PLEASURE!



THEY CARTED EVERYONE OFF TO PRISON. OBVIOUSLY, WE WERE VERY SCARED THE FIRST TIME.

... BUT WE QUICKLY GOT USED TO IT. WE WOULD EVEN ARRIVE LAUGHING.



THEN CAME THE USUAL SPIEL ...

..AGAINST THE MORAL CODE... THE BLOOD OF MARTYRS... TWENTY THOUSAND TUMANS...



OUR PARENTS PAID AND WE WERE RELEASED.



... UNTIL THE NEXT TIME. TO BE ABLE TO PARTY, YOU HAD TO HAVE MEANS.

AND THEN ONE NIGHT.











THE WEDDING



A FEW DAYS LATER, MY DECISION WAS MADE: I WAS GOING TO GET MARRIED. I ANNOUNCED IT TO MY FATHER. HE INVITED US, ME AND REZA, TO A RESTAURANT TO TALK ABOUT IT.

WELCOME!



AFTER DINNER.

AS YOUR FUTURE FATHER-IN-LAW, I'M TAKING THE LIBERTY OF ASKING YOU THREE THINGS.



FIRST: YOU ARE SURELY AWARE THAT IN THIS COUNTRY A WOMAN'S "RIGHT TO DIVORCE" IS NOT GUARANTEED. SHE ONLY HAS IT IF HER HUSBAND ALLOWS THIS OPTION DURING THE SIGNING OF THE MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE. MY DAUGHTER MUST ENJOY THIS RIGHT.



SECOND: MY WIFE AND I HAVE RAISED OUR DAUGHTER WITH COMPLETE FREEDOM. IF SHE SPENDS HER WHOLE LIFE IN IRAN, SHE'LL WITHER. I'M THEREFORE ASKING THE BOTH OF YOU TO LEAVE TO CONTINUE YOUR STUDIES IN EUROPE AFTER YOUR DIPLOMA. YOU WILL HAVE MY FINANCIAL SUPPORT.



THIRD: LIVE TOGETHER AS LONG AS YOU FEEL TRULY HAPPY. LIFE IS TOO SHORT TO BE LIVED BADLY.



WAITER, THE CHECK, PLEASE!

YES, SIR.



LONG AFTERWARD MY FATHER ADMITTED TO ME THAT HE HAD ALWAYS KNOWN THAT I WOULD GET DIVORCED. HE WANTED ME TO REALIZE BY MYSELF THAT REZA AND I WERE NOT MADE FOR EACH OTHER. HE WAS RIGHT.

NEXT, I CALLED MY MOTHER AT MY AUNT'S HOUSE IN VANCOUVER.

HELLO, MOM! HOW ARE YOU?

MUCH BETTER NOW THAT I'VE HEARD YOUR VOICE!

MOM, I HAVE SOME VERY BIG NEWS TO TELL YOU... I'M GETTING MARRIED!

YOU'RE GETTING MARRIED? BUT TO WHOM??

WHO DO YOU THINK? TO REZA, OF COURSE!

BUT YOU ARE STILL TOO YOUNG! LISTEN! YOU WAIT UNTIL I GET BACK. I'LL BE THERE IN THREE WEEKS. WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT AGAIN THEN.

SO?
WELL, SHE DOESN'T APPROVE.

I HALF EXPECTED THAT... IT'S NOT SERIOUS. I'LL TALK TO HER. DON'T WORRY.

I NEVER KNEW WHAT THEY SAID TO EACH OTHER, NEVERTHELESS WHEN MY MOTHER GOT BACK TO TEHRAN...

OH MY DARLING, I'LL MAKE ALL THE ARRANGEMENTS. THIS CEREMONY MUST BE WORTHY OF YOU.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS?

UHH ... IT'S A PRETTY DRESS, BUT I CAN'T WEAR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

DO YOU LIKE IT,
BABY?

...

I KNOW THAT YOU WANT TO DO YOUR BEST FOR ME, BUT I DETEST WEDDING DRESSES, FASHIONABLE HAIRSTYLES AND ALL THE REST. COULDN'T WE HAVE JUST A SMALL LITTLE PARTY...

LISTEN, WE HAVE ONLY ONE CHILD: YOU! IT'S POSSIBLE THAT THIS WILL BE YOUR ONE AND ONLY WEDDING. YOU DRESS AND WEAR YOUR HAIR THE WAY YOU WANT, BUT LET US AT LEAST CELEBRATE THIS EVENT IN OUR OWN WAY.

I GAVE IN, AND MY PARENTS TOOK ADVANTAGE BY INVITING FOUR HUNDRED PEOPLE, HAVING TWO BANDS, A VIDEO CREW, FLOWERS ...

THE BRIDE IS HERE!

MY DARLING!

FIRST, WE WENT BEFORE THE MULLAH.

MR. REZA... DO YOU TAKE MISS MARTJANE ...
MISS MARTJANE ... DO YOU TAKE MR. REZA ...

YES!

YES!

THEN IT WAS FOLKLORE'S TURN.
TRADITION REQUIRED THAT A
HAPPILY MARRIED WOMAN RUB
TWO SUGAR LOAVES ABOVE OUR
HEADS TO PASS ON HER JOY
AND PROSPERITY.



TRADITION ALSO REQUIRED
THAT WE PLUNGE OUR FINGERS
IN HONEY...



AND THAT WE SUCK ONE
ANOTHER'S FINGERS TO BEGIN
OUR MARRIED LIFE ON A SWEET
NOTE.



THEN CAME THE GIFTS.

HERE, IT'S FOR YOU!

MOM!



SO, WHEN CAN WE
EXPECT KIDS?

SOON.



YOU LOOK RADIANT!

THANK YOU!



ARE YOU THE BRIDE?

HEE! HEE! HEE!
NO, SHE IS!







AFTER ONE MONTH OF MARRIAGE, WE SET UP SEPARATE BEDROOMS.



HE HAD HIS LIFE ...

WHERE'S YOUR WIFE?

ON VACATION, WITH HER COUSIN.



...AND I HAD MINE.

AND REZA'S WELL?

YEAH, HE'S WITH HIS BROTHER.



WE HAD BEEN CONSIDERED THE MODEL COUPLE FOR SO LONG AND BY SO MANY PEOPLE THAT WE WEREN'T ABLE TO ACCEPT OUR FAILURE ...

... WE WERE KEEPING UP APPEARANCES IN PUBLIC.

IS SHE GOING TO SHUT HER BIG MOUTH?

WHAT AN ASS!



BUT AS SOON AS WE WERE ALONE.

YOU NEVER WANT TO GO OUT! IF I HAVE TO GO EVERYWHERE ALONE, WHAT'S THE POINT OF LIVING TOGETHER?



I LET YOU DO WHATEVER YOU WANT! I'M NOT ONE OF THOSE MACHO MEN WHO EXPECTS YOU TO REPORT BACK! SO LEAVE ME ALONE!



IN THE SPACE OF TWO MONTHS, WE WENT FROM WEEKLY FIGHTS TO DAILY INSULTS.



THE SATELLITE



ASIDE FROM THESE LITTLE DISAPPOINTMENTS, WE DIDN'T FEEL AT ALL CONCERNED ABOUT THE EVENTS, EVEN IF THEY WERE TAKING PLACE IN THE PERSIAN GULF, WHICH IS TO SAY, IN OUR BACKYARD!



THIS WAR HAS UNLEASHED A PANIC IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ...



PEOPLE ARE FILLING THEIR SHOPPINGCARTS. IT'S LIKE A MADHOUSE IN WESTERN SUPERMARKETS.



... HERE ARE SOME ACCOUNTS:

I LIVED THROUGH THE SECOND WORLD WAR! IT WAS HORRIBLE!



WE HAVE TWO BABIES! WE HAVE TO STOCK UP ON POWDERED MILK AND DIAPERS.



THERE ARE GOING TO BE ATTACKS! THEY'LL COUNTER-ATTACK! THEY'LL COME AFTER US ON OUR OWN TERRITORY!

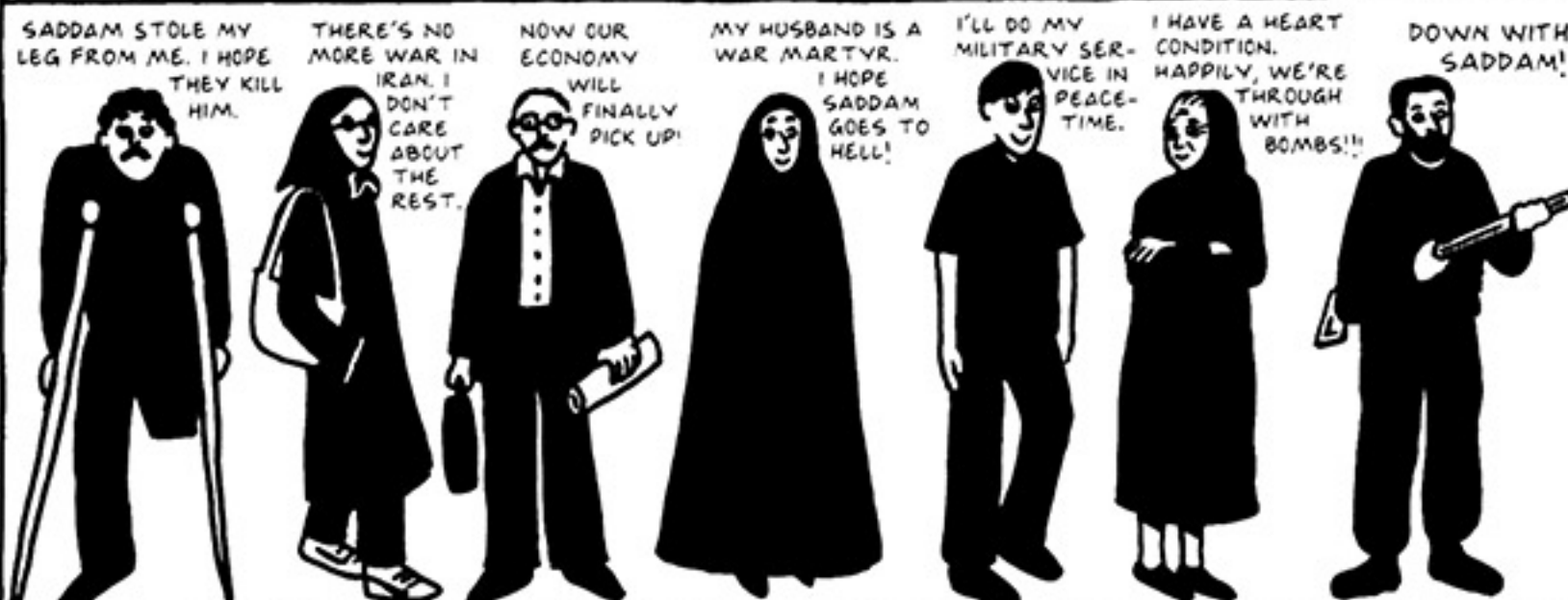


HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA!





AT THE TIME, THIS KIND OF ANALYSIS WASN'T COMMONPLACE. AFTER OUR OWN WAR, WE WERE HAPPY THAT IRAQ GOT ITSELF ATTACKED AND DELIGHTED THAT IT WASN'T HAPPENING IN OUR COUNTRY.



WE WERE FINALLY ABLE TO SLEEP PEACEFULLY WITHOUT FEAR OF MISSILES...



WE NO LONGER NEEDED TO LINE UP WITH OUR FOOD RATION COUPONS ...



AND THEN, THERE WASN'T ANY MORE OPPOSITION. THE PROTESTERS HAD BEEN EXECUTED.



OR HAD FLED THE COUNTRY ANY WAY POSSIBLE.



THE REGIME HAD ABSOLUTE POWER ...



I WASN'T ANY DIFFERENT FROM THEM. ASIDE FROM THE TIME I SPENT WITH MY PARENTS, I LIVED FROM DAY TO DAY WITHOUT ASKING MYSELF ANY QUESTIONS. NEVERTHELESS, IN JANUARY 1992, A BIG EVENT OCCURRED:

THAT WAS FARIBORZ ON THE TELEPHONE. HE JUST INSTALLED A SATELLITE ANTENNA AT HIS HOUSE!



THE SATELLITE ANTENNA WAS SYNONYMOUS WITH THE OPENING UP OF THE REST OF THE WORLD.



WE COULD FINALLY EXPERIENCE A VIEW DIFFERENT FROM THE ONE DICTATED BY OUR GOVERNMENT.

LOOK AT THIS ONE! HE'S SO IMPATIENT THAT HE DIDN'T EVEN SAY HELLO!

WHERE IS THIS ANTENNA?



HERE IT IS!



WE SPENT THE ENTIRE DAY AT FARIBORZ'S WATCHING MTV AND EUROSPORT.



BY THE END OF THE EVENING, OUR MINDS WERE MUCH BROADER!

SOON THIS DEVICE DECORATED THE ROOFS OF ALL THE BUILDINGS IN THE NORTH OF TEHRAN.



THE REGIME BECAME AWARE THAT THIS NEW PHENOMENON WAS WORKING AGAINST THEIR INDOCTRINATION. IT THEREFORE DECREED A BAN, BUT IT WAS TOO LATE. PEOPLE WHO HAD TASTED IMAGES OTHER THAN THOSE OF BEARDED MEN RESISTED BY HIDING THEIR ANTENNAS DURING THE DAY.

NIGHT SATELLITE

DAY SATELLITE



*THE CHIC NEIGHBORHOODS

MY PARENTS PROCURED ONE FOR THEMSELVES, TOO. FROM THEN ON I SPENT WHOLE DAYS AND NIGHTS AT THEIR HOUSE WATCHING TV.



THE PROGRAM DIDN'T MATTER. FROM THE MOMENT THERE WERE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE, I WAS HAPPY. ONE NIGHT ...



LISTEN, WE
NEED TO TALK!

WAIT, WAIT,
THEY'RE
GOING TO
ARREST HIM!



NO! WE'RE
GOING TO
TALK FIRST.

BUT ...
WHAT'S
GOT INTO
YOU??



THIS MORNING WHEN I LEFT
FOR WORK, YOU WERE ON THE
SOFA. I COME HOME TWELVE
HOURS LATER, AND YOU ARE
STILL IN THE SAME PLACE.



WHAT'S GOING ON? IS IT YOUR
MARRIAGE THAT'S MAKING YOU
DEPRESSED? I DON'T RECOGNIZE
YOU ANYMORE! YOU WERE ALWAYS
CURIOUS, YOU READ, YOU WERE
INTERESTED IN EVERYTHING!
YOU WERE ALWAYS AHEAD OF
YOUR YEARS ... NOW ...



... NOW I AM A MARRIED
WOMAN. I'M TWENTY-TWO.
I'M AN ADULT!

ANYONE CAN
BE TWENTY-
TWO AND BE
MARRIED. IT
DOESN'T
REQUIRE AN
EXCEPTIONAL
INTELLECTUAL
EFFORT! ...
YOU WOULD
BE BETTER
OFF THINKING
ABOUT GET-
TING YOUR
DIPLOMA!
IT'S IN LESS
THAN A
YEAR.



IF THAT'S HOW IT
IS, I'M GETTING
OUT OF HERE!

GOODBYE
THEN.



MY FATHER WAS RIGHT. ANYONE COULD GET MARRIED. IN FACT, EVERYONE WAS GETTING MARRIED. THERE WERE THOSE WHO WERE MARRYING IRANIANS IN AMERICA IN THE HOPES OF ONE DAY BECOMING ACTRESSES IN HOLLYWOOD,



THOSE WHO WERE JOINING THEMSELVES TO RICH OLD MEN,



LUCKIER ONES WITH RICH YOUNG MEN,



THERE WERE ALSO SOME REAL LOVE STORIES, LIKE THAT OF NIYOOSHA AND ALI.



... AND THEN THERE WAS REZA AND ME.



AS FOR THE SINGLE ONES, THEY WERE WAITING THEIR TURN:

RIGHT NOW, I HAVE THREE CANDIDATES: ONE IS A DOCTOR BUT HE LIVES IN IRAN, THE OTHER LIVES IN LOS ANGELES BUT HE'S SUPER UGLY AND THE THIRD IS VERY HANDSOME BUT POOR.



MY FATHER WAS SO RIGHT THAT THE NEXT DAY, I APOLOGIZED TO HIM.

DAD, DO YOU STILL WANT TO TALK TO ME?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?



I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT YOU. I JUST WANTED TO SHAKE YOU A LITTLE.

I KNOW, DAD. I REACTED VIOLENTLY BECAUSE YOU HIT A NERVE.



THEN HE RUSHED INTO THE LIBRARY AND CAME BACK WITH THREE BOOKS.

HERE, READ THESE. THERE'S "THE SECRETS OF THE CIA," "FREEMASONRY IN IRAN" AND "THE MEMOIRS OF MOSSADEGH."

OH GREAT! COOL!!



TO CATCH UP, I READ ALL OF THEM IN TEN DAYS. DESPITE MY ASSUMPTIONS, I FOUND THEM REALLY INTERESTING.

*IRANIAN PRIME MINISTER. HE NATIONALIZED THE OIL INDUSTRY IN 1951.

MY NEW SPHERES OF INTEREST BROUGHT ME INTO CONTACT WITH NEW PEOPLE, OFTEN MUCH OLDER THAN ME. AMONG THEM, A CERTAIN DR. M, AT WHOSE HOUSE ALL THE INTELLECTUALS GATHERED ON THE FIRST MONDAY OF EVERY MONTH.

IN A COUNTRY LIKE OURS, WITH AS MANY RESOURCES AS WE HAVE, IT'S NOT RIGHT THAT 70% OF THE POPULATION SHOULD LIVE BELOW THE POVERTY LINE!



IF MOSSADEGH HAD BEEN ABLE TO SEE OUT HIS PROJECT OF REFORM, IRAN WOULDN'T BE FINDING ITSELF IN THIS SITUATION TODAY.



IT'S THE ENGLISH AND THE AMERICANS' FAULT. THEY'RE THE ONES WHO DEPOSED HIM BY ORGANIZING THE COUP D'ETAT IN 1953!



MAYBE, BUT WHAT DID WE DO TO STOP THEM? OUTSIDERS WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE THEIR ENDS WITHOUT CERTAIN IRANIAN TRAITORS! IF WE WANT TO RECONSTRUCT THIS COUNTRY, WE HAVE TO BEGIN BY ADMITTING OUR OWN MIS-DEEDS!!



PUSHED BY MY PARENTS, ENCOURAGED BY DR. M AND HIS FRIENDS, AND ALSO A LITTLE THANKS TO MYSELF, I CHANGED MY LIFE.



ONCE AGAIN, I ARRIVED AT MY USUAL CONCLUSION: ONE MUST EDUCATE ONESELF.



THE END

IN JUNE 1993, AT THE END OF OUR FOURTH YEAR OF STUDY, REZA AND I WERE CALLED IN BY THE PROFESSOR WHO WAS HEAD OF THE VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT.

YOU ARE MY TWO BEST STUDENTS. I THEREFORE HAVE A FINAL PROJECT TO PROPOSE TO YOU. IT INVOLVES CREATING A THEME PARK BASED ON OUR MYTHOLOGICAL HEROES.



THE SUBJECT WAS SO EXTRAORDINARY THAT WE FORGOT OUR CONFLICTS AND AGREED TO WORK TOGETHER.



WE SPENT THE WHOLE SUMMER IN LIBRARIES, ...



MUSEUMS, ...



WITH SCHOLARS, RESEARCHERS AND DOCTORS IN THE HUMAN SCIENCES.

IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY, HEROES ARE PREDESTINED, WHILE OUR MYTHOLOGY IS LACKING IN THE NOTION OF DESTINY!



FROM JUNE 1993 TO JANUARY 1994, WE WERE SO BUSY THAT WE DIDN'T EVEN FIGHT ONCE.



WE WANTED TO CREATE THE EQUIVALENT OF DISNEYLAND IN TEHRAN. WE HAD THOUGHT OF ALL THE DETAILS: DINING, LODGING, ATTRACTIONS ...



WE WORKED NIGHT AND DAY FOR SEVEN MONTHS.



FINALLY CAME THE DAY OF GRADUATION.



BEFORE THE JURY ARRIVED, OUR FRIENDS AND FAMILIES WERE GIVEN A CHANCE TO APPRECIATE OUR WORK UP CLOSE.



SINCE I WAS A LOT MORE TALKATIVE THAN REZA, WE HAD DECIDED THAT I WOULD DEFEND OUR DISSERTATION.

OUR MYTHOLOGY IS ONE OF THE MOST COMPLEX MYTHOLOGIES ON EARTH, BUT WE HAVE NEVER KNOWN HOW TO MINE IT, FOR FEAR OF MAKING IT VULGAR. MANY THINGS, LIKE THE HOLY GRAIL, THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE, ETC., ETC., COME FROM IRAN. IN OUR COUNTRY, WE HAVE THEME PARKS, BUT THE MOTIFS ARE AMERICAN. WHICH IS THE REASON BEHIND OUR INITIATIVE.



WE GOT A TWENTY OUT OF TWENTY. AFTER THE DELIBERATION ...

BRAVO, MY CHILDREN! IT WAS PERFECT! THANKS TO YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE YOU, I STILL HAVE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OF IRAN. YOU SHOULD PROPOSE YOUR PROJECT TO THE MAYOR OF TEHRAN. I PERSONALLY KNOW THE MAYOR'S DEPUTY. YOU CAN USE MY NAME.





AFTER CITY HALL, I HAD A RENDEZVOUS WITH A CHILDHOOD FRIEND, FARNAZ.

THE ONLY THING THAT COULD HAVE SAVED MY RELATIONSHIP WAS THIS PROJECT. NOW THAT IT'S A LOST CAUSE, I THINK WE'LL SEPARATE.



I DON'T SEE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN YOUR THEME PARK AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP!

SINCE WE BEGAN OUR SHARED LIFE, IT'S THE FIRST TIME THAT WE REALLY INVESTED IN SOMETHING TOGETHER. IT BROUGHT US CLOSER.



DO YOU STILL LOVE HIM?

I DON'T KNOW.

THEN LISTEN TO ME. A YEAR AGO, MY SISTER LEFT HER HUSBAND ...



... FROM THE MINUTE SHE HAD THE TITLE OF DIVORCED WOMAN, THE BUTCHER,



THE PASTRY CHEF,



THE BAKER,



THE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SELLER,



THE ITINERANT CIGARETTE SELLER,



EVEN BEGGARS IN THE STREET, ALL MADE IT CLEAR THEY'D LIKE TO SLEEP WITH HER.



FROM MEN'S POINT OF VIEW, FOR ONE THING, THEIR DICKS ARE IRRESISTIBLE, AND FOR ANOTHER THING, SINCE YOU ARE DIVORCED, YOU'RE NO LONGER A VIRGIN AND YOU HAVE NO REASON TO REFUSE THEM. THEY HAVE COMPLETE CONFIDENCE!!! LISTEN, THERE'S NOTHING SURPRISING ABOUT IT! EVER SINCE THEIR BIRTH, THEIR MOTHERS HAVE CALLED THEM "DOUDOUL TALA."*



SO, AS LONG AS YOUR LIFE ISN'T HELL, STAY WITH YOUR HUSBAND! I KNOW YOUR FAMILY IS OPEN-MINDED, BUT EVERYONE ELSE WILL JUDGE YOU!

*GOLDEN PENIS

THIS CONVERSATION WITH FARNAZ SHOOK ME, BUT I DIDN'T AGREE WITH HER SUGGESTIONS. I REALIZED SUDDENLY THAT I NO LONGER REALLY LOVED REZA. I HAD TO GET DIVORCED! I RUSHED HOME TO TELL HIM.



DON'T LET IT GET TO YOU! AFTER ALL, IT'S ONLY ONE PROJECT. WE'LL HAVE OTHERS!

I KNOW ... I HAVE TO GO SEE GRANDMA.

GOOD IDEA! SHE'LL KNOW HOW TO COMFORT YOU.



TWENTY MINUTES LATER.



DON'T YOU WANT TO TAKE OFF THAT PAIN-IN-THE-ASS OF A HOOD?? IT MAKES ME CLAUSTROPHOBIC!

GRANDMA, IT'S HORRIBLE!

WHAT IS IT THAT'S SO HORRIBLE?



I THINK I NO LONGER LOVE REZA, I THINK WE SHOULD SEPARATE.

THAT'S YOUR "HORRIBLE" THING? OH MY! YOU SCARED ME! I THOUGHT THAT SOMEONE HAD DIED!

YOU KNOW I HAVE A HEART CONDITION! ALL THESE TEARS FOR A DIVORCE?



LISTEN TO ME! I GOT ONE, FIFTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, AND LET ME TELL YOU THAT AT THE TIME, NO ONE ENDED THEIR MARRIAGE. BUT I ALWAYS TOLD MYSELF THAT I WOULD BE HAPPIER ALONE THAN WITH A SHITMAKER!!

YES, BUT ...



NO BUTS ABOUT IT! A FIRST MARRIAGE IS A DRY RUN FOR THE SECOND. YOU'LL BE MORE SATISFIED THE NEXT TIME. IN THE MEANTIME, IF YOU'RE CRYING SO MUCH, MAYBE IT MEANS THAT YOU STILL LOVE HIM! THERE'S NO REASON YOU HAVE TO TELL HIM EVERYTHING RIGHT AWAY. TAKE YOUR TIME, THINK ABOUT IT, AND THE DAY YOU DON'T WANT IT ANYMORE, YOU LEAVE HIM! WHEN A TOOTH IS ROTTEN, YOU HAVE TO PULL IT OUT!





BUT A FEW HAIRS NOT BEING ENOUGH TO CONDEMN HIM, HE WAS SET FREE AFTER TWO WEEKS. GILA, THE MAGAZINE'S GRAPHIC DESIGNER, AND I WENT TO VISIT HIM.



SO, WHAT HAPPENED? TELL US!

NOTHING! I EXPLAINED TO THEM THAT MY DESIGN CAME FROM A FAIRY TALE IN WHICH A PRINCESS' LOVER CLIMBS INTO HER ROOM BY USING THE LONG HAIR OF HIS LOVED ONE AND, NOT BEING ABLE TO DRAW A WOMAN WITHOUT A VEIL, I HAD DRAWN A BEARDED MAN.



AT THAT, THEY STARTED TO YELL, SAYING THAT I WAS INSINUATING THAT BEARDED MEN WERE SISSIES. I SWORE THAT THAT WASN'T IN ANY WAY MY INTENTION.



AND THEY BEAT ME UP... I HAD BRUISES ALL OVER MY BODY. FINALLY, WELL... YOU PAY DEARLY FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION THESE DAYS.



I'M GOING TO GET THE DOOR. IT MUST BE MY WIFE. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.



HELLO, I'M MANDANA.

MARTJANE, I'M VERY HAPPY TO MEET YOU.





ON OUR WAY BACK.

TO THINK THAT HE WAS MY HERO FOR TWENTY DAYS!! HIS WHOLE SPIEL ABOUT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, WHILE HE DIDN'T EVEN LET HIS WIFE SAY ONE WORD! AH, IRANIAN MEN!

DON'T SAY THAT! IT'S NOT IRANIAN MEN, BUT MEN, PERIOD. TWO YEARS AGO, I WAS GOING OUT WITH A SPANISH DIPLOMAT. ON THE SURFACE, HE BEHAVED BETTER, BUT DEEP DOWN, IT WAS THE SAME THING.

EXCEPT HERE, ALL THE LAWS ARE ON THEIR SIDE!

IF A GUY KILLS TEN WOMEN IN THE PRESENCE OF FIFTEEN OTHERS, NO ONE CAN CONDEMN HIM BECAUSE IN A MURDER CASE, WE WOMEN, WE CAN'T EVEN TESTIFY! HE'S ALSO THE ONE WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO DIVORCE AND EVEN IF HE GIVES IT TO YOU, HE NONETHELESS HAS CUSTODY OF THE CHILDREN! I HEARD A RELIGIOUS MAN JUSTIFY THIS LAW BY SAYING THAT MAN WAS THE GRAIN AND WOMAN, THE EARTH IN WHICH THE GRAIN GREW, THEREFORE THE CHILD NATURALLY BELONGED TO HIS FATHER! DO YOU REALIZE?? I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE. I WANT TO LEAVE THIS COUNTRY!

GILA DROPPED ME OFF AT HOME. MY SISTER-IN-LAW WAS THERE.

HELLO KATAYONE, HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

LIKE A WOMAN WHO'S EIGHT MONTHS PREGNANT! I FEEL HEAVY, BUT AT LEAST I ONLY HAVE TO BEAR IT FOR A FEW MORE WEEKS.

WELL, I'LL LEAVE YOU TWO. DON'T FORGET THAT MY SON NEEDS A COUSIN. WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

WE NEED TO TALK.

WE'VE BEEN MARRIED FOR THREE YEARS, AND FOR THREE YEARS WE'VE HAD OUR OWN ROOMS. WE'RE NOT A REAL COUPLE...

WE'RE NOT A COUPLE AT ALL.

WE'VE STAYED TOGETHER OUT OF AFFECTION, CERTAINLY, BUT MOSTLY OUT OF HABIT. WE WEREN'T ABLE TO ADMIT THAT WE AREN'T MADE FOR EACH OTHER, BECAUSE THAT WOULD MEAN THAT WE RECOGNIZED OUR FAILURE.

YES, BUT I'M STILL IN LOVE WITH YOU.

WHEN I WAS IN LOVE WITH YOU, YOU DIDN'T LET ME IN. NOW IT'S TOO LATE, REZA. I DON'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE.

LET'S GO TO FRANCE TOGETHER. I'M SURE IT'S THE SOCIAL PRESSURE THAT'S AFFECTING US.

BUT IT'S FOR THIS SAME REASON THAT WE GOT MARRIED, TO GET AROUND THE SOCIAL PRESSURE. OUR LOVE HAS BEEN DEAD FOR A LONG TIME! THERE'S NO POINT IN TRYING AGAIN. IT'S A WASTE OF TIME.

I DON'T KNOW HOW I MANAGED TO TELL HIM ALL THAT SO SUDDENLY. MY GRANDMA WAS RIGHT: I HAD TAKEN MY TIME, AND I NEVER REGRETTED WHAT I SAID.



BETWEEN JUNE AND SEPTEMBER '94, THE DATE OF MY DEFINITIVE DEPARTURE, I SPENT EVERY MORNING WANDERING IN THE MOUNTAINS OF TEHRAN, WHERE I MEMORIZED EVERY CORNER.



I WENT ON A TRIP WITH MY GRANDMA TO THE SHORE OF THE CASPIAN SEA, WHERE I FILLED MY LUNGS WITH THAT VERY SPECIAL AIR. THAT AIR THAT DOESN'T EXIST ANYWHERE ELSE.



I WENT TO MY GRANDFATHER'S TOMB, WHERE I PROMISED HIM THAT HE WOULD BE PROUD OF ME.



I ALSO WENT BEHIND THE EVINE PRISON WHERE THE BODY OF MY UNCLE ANOOSH LAY IN AN UNMARKED GRAVE, NEXT TO THOUSANDS OF OTHER CADAVERS. I GAVE HIM MY WORD TO TRY TO REMAIN AS HONEST AS POSSIBLE.



I ALSO SPENT SOME WONDERFUL MOMENTS WITH MY PARENTS ...



... UNTIL SEPTEMBER 9, 1994, WHEN, ALONG WITH MY GRANDMA, THEY ACCOMPANIED ME TO MEHRABAD AIRPORT.



I HAD CHOSEN THIS DEPARTURE BUT DESPITE EVERYTHING, I FELT VERY SAD.



MY FATHER CRIED AS USUAL,



AND MY MOTHER KEPT HER HEAD.

THIS TIME, YOU'RE LEAVING FOR GOOD. YOU ARE A FREE WOMAN. THE IRAN OF TODAY IS NOT FOR YOU. I FORBID YOU TO COME BACK!

YES, MOM.



THE GOODBYES WERE MUCH LESS PAINFUL THAN TEN YEARS BEFORE WHEN I EMBARKED FOR AUSTRIA: THERE WAS NO LONGER A WAR, I WAS NO LONGER A CHILD, MY MOTHER DIDN'T FAINT AND MY GRANDMA WAS THERE, HAPPILY...



... HAPPILY, BECAUSE SINCE THE NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 9, 1984, I ONLY SAW HER AGAIN ONCE, DURING THE IRANIAN NEW YEAR IN MARCH 1995. SHE DIED JANUARY 4, 1996 ... FREEDOM HAD A PRICE ...

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